COMING TO AMERICA P. 10 • ROOT, ROOT, ROOT FOR THE HOME TEAM P. 96

Smithsonian

SPECIAL ISSUE

SEPTEMBER 2009

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TOP TRAVEL WRITERS' DREAM ASSIGNMENTS

- SUSAN ORLEAN: MOROCCO'S DONKEYS
- FRANCINE PROSE: TRADITIONAL JAPAN
- GEOFFREY C. WARD: INDIA'S PUNJAB
- CAROLINE ALEXANDER: BLIGH'S BREADFRUIT
- FRANCES MAYES: UNDER THE POLISH SUN
- PAUL THEROUX DRIVES ACROSS AMERICA

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My goodness, I was handsome in 2008!

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I'm an even handsomer chap in 2009!

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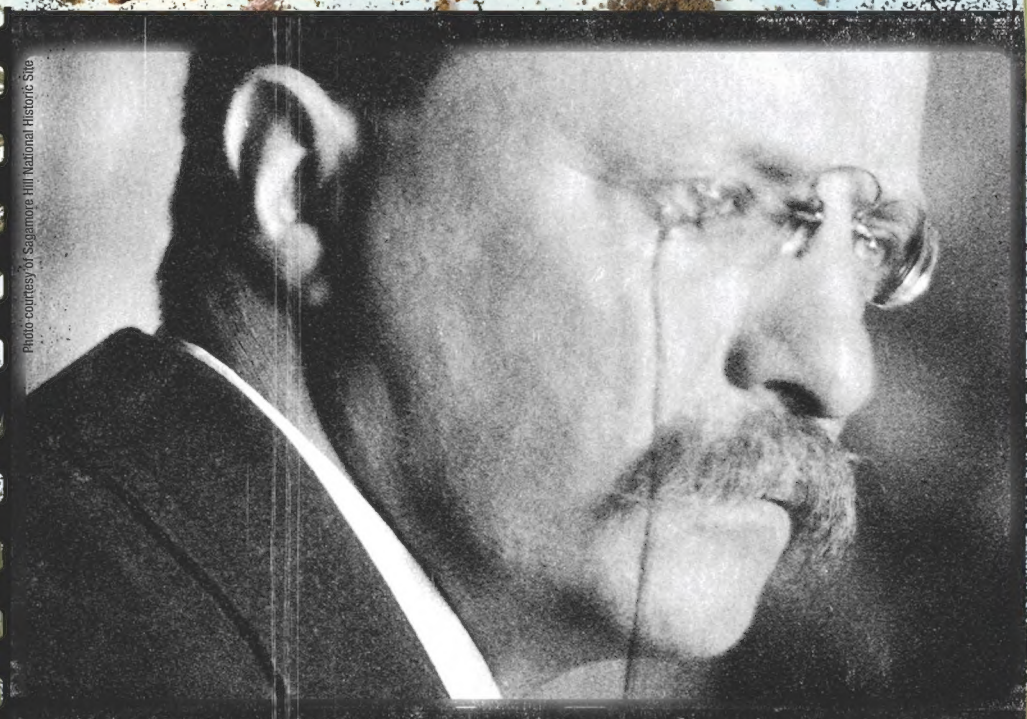

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PHOTOGRAPH BY RAGHU RAI / MAGNUM PHOTOS

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LETTERS READERS RESPOND TO THE **JULY** ISSUE

I was ultimately saddened by the prospect of robots eventually caring for our elderly and baby-sitting our children ["Birth of a Robot"]. I strongly encourage the furthering of science and technology but not at the expense of our integrity. In the end, will robots be more like humans or humans more like robots? **ALESHA WILSON,** TULSA, OKLAHOMA

FICTION TO FACT

"BIRTH OF A ROBOT" was excellent. Robots have come a long way and they will keep evolving. Everything we have read in science fiction books about cyborgs, androids and robots likely will become a reality one day. They will be as intelligent as we are and they will want and demand the same rights as human beings.

PAUL DALE ROBERTS
ELK GROVE, CALIFORNIA

WAVE OF THE FUTURE

IN "CATCHING A WAVE," electrical engineer Annette von Jouanne is quoted as saying she wanted to find or improve upon a useful source of energy that was not "scarce or fleeting or unpredictable or dirty." Nuclear power, anyone?

GREGORY D. FITZPATRICK
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

BYE-BYE, BLACKBIRD

I WAS ONE OF THOSE fortunate enough to be on hand the day the SR-71 Blackbird was flown to Dulles International Airport to be turned over to the Smithsonian Institution ["Stealth Machine"]. The pilot made a low pass in front of the tower and turned on the afterburners as he passed, spewing out flames 10 to 15 feet behind the engines and leaving the crowd in awe of this incredibly powerful match of man and machine. The SR-71 program came to its end amid much controversy, evident in the many teary-eyed supporters present, including those from Lockheed, the CIA and the Defense Department. There is no doubt the program served its purpose well and is a credit to all involved.

PHILLIP BABCOCK
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

CAPITOL OFFENSE

HOW COULD we not enjoy William Ecenbarger's take on Washington's political discourse ["There Oughta Be a Law"]? Excellent piece, even to a couple of ol' Yeller Dog Democrats down here in LBJ and Sam Rayburn Texas.

JOE AND BOBBI SCHOTT
CASTROVILLE, TEXAS

"THERE OUGHTA BE A LAW" is aptly titled. There should be a law mandating that every politician in and out of Washington read this (not to mention all cliché-prone college English students).

ARLINE AND WILLIAM SPINDELL
LAGUNA WOODS, CALIFORNIA

CHINESE SOLDIERS IN U.S.

I ESPECIALLY ENJOYED "On the March," the story about the thousands of terra cotta soldiers uncovered in 1974 in China. Some years ago in Katy, Texas, at a museum called Forbidden Gardens, I saw a one-third-scale replica of the emperor's tomb and army, as well as a model of China's Forbidden City. Created to help promote knowledge in the United States of ancient Chinese history and culture, the museum contains our country's only large-scale replicas of the first emperor of China's army. Apparently, Katy was chosen as the museum's location because of its proximity to Houston, which boasts a large Asian population.

VIOLA PIERONI
CINCINNATI, OHIO

"ON THE MARCH" says that ancient Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huangdi is estimated to have used 720,000 workers to construct numerous palaces as well as the terra cotta warriors, horses and other figures in his great tomb complex. Now that's what I call a stimulus package!

CORDIER SHILLING
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

CORRECTIONS:

"Stealth Machine" states that the titanium used to make the SR-71 was purchased from the Soviet Union. In fact, although the raw material for the titanium originated in the Soviet Union, the actual titanium products used to make the spy plane were produced in the United States. We also misstated the nature of the one in-flight fatality involving the SR-71. It occurred when the plane broke apart after refueling. We regret the errors.

Please send letters to **LettersEd@si.edu** or to **Letters, Smithsonian, MRC 513, P.O. Box 37012, Washington, D.C. 20013.** Include a telephone number and address. Letters may be edited for clarity or space. Because of the high volume of mail we receive, we cannot respond to all letters. Send queries about the Smithsonian Institution to info@si.edu or to VIARC, Public Inquiry Mail Service, P.O. Box 37012, Washington, D.C. 20013.

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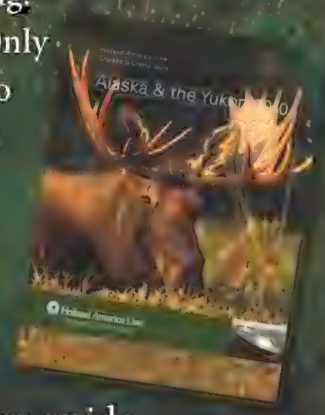

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WILD THINGS

LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

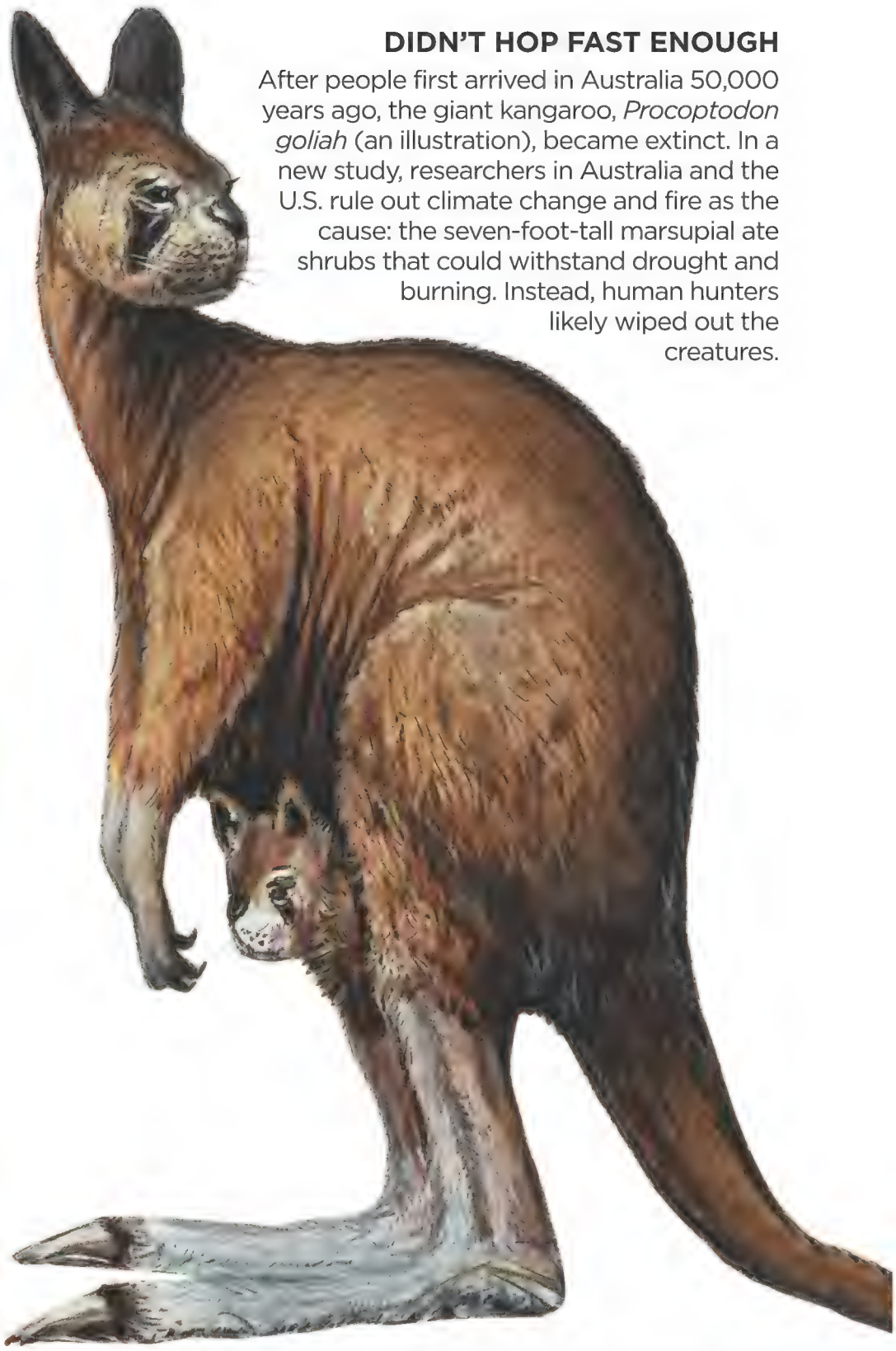
BY ABBY CALLARD, T.A. FRAIL
MEGAN GAMBINO, ASHLEY LUTHERN
AND SARAH ZIELINSKI

WEB OF LIES

Orb spiders on Taiwan's Orchid Island place bundles of prey carcasses and egg sacs on their webs, making the webs more visible to predators. A bad strategy? Not really. Researchers at Tunghai University found that the globs, similar in size and color to the spiders' bodies, act as decoys. The more there are, the less likely a bird is to attack the actual spider.

DIDN'T HOP FAST ENOUGH

After people first arrived in Australia 50,000 years ago, the giant kangaroo, *Procoptodon goliah* (an illustration), became extinct. In a new study, researchers in Australia and the U.S. rule out climate change and fire as the cause: the seven-foot-tall marsupial ate shrubs that could withstand drought and burning. Instead, human hunters likely wiped out the creatures.



NOSE JOB

The Bourret's horseshoe bat, found in Southeast Asia, has a nose that's twice as long as other horseshoe bat noses. Now a study from Virginia Tech and elsewhere hints at a reason: the prominent schnoz shapes the sonar beam the Bourret's uses to navigate and detect prey. A shorter nose produces a less-focused sonar beam, according to simulations, whereas the Bourret's nose sharpens the sonar signal and gives it a greater range.

PARASITE PROTECTION

Why do the variegated leaves of the Ecuadorean rain forest plant *Caladium steudneriifolium* (below right) mimic the appearance of solid-colored caladium leaves infested with parasitic moth larvae (below left)? Defense, say researchers in Germany. Moths mistake variegated leaves for already-infested ones and avoid laying eggs there. For the variegated plant, the trade-off may be less energy: white streaks reduce photosynthesis.

Observed

NAME: The tentacled snake, *Erpeton tentaculatus*, of Southeast Asia. **HUNTS:** In the J position. **EXPLOITS:** The C-start. **EATS:** With very little effort, says Kenneth Catania of Vanderbilt University. When fish perceive a threat, they reflexively turn away and their bodies form a C, known as a C-start. The J position is the stance a hungry *E. tentaculatus* assumes (1) with its head at the lower end of the J. If a fish swims by, the snake flexes its body (2) scaring the fish into forming a C and landing it in the snake's mouth (3). It's a rare case of a predator exploiting its prey's best defense.

Watch the tentacled snake strike at Smithsonian.com/WildThings

MICHAEL LONG / NHMPL; I-MIN TSO; GARETH JONES; SIGRID LIEDE (2); KEN CATANIA (3)

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to heroes, artists and angels.

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800-THE ALAMO

Off to the Races

Andrej Bozek and his son Alec fled Poland in 1974. Photographer Sean Kernan

followed them from an Austrian refugee camp all the way to Texas **BY DEWITT SAGE**

SEAN KERNAN

On their first July 4 in America, Andrej (left) and Alec took in the horse races at the Gillespie County Fair.

IN THE SPRING OF 1974, Andrej Bozek came up with a plan so risky that he kept it even from his wife. "She probably would have gone to the police," he says.

"I probably would have," Irene Bozek agrees. "I thought it was *much* too dangerous."

Andrej, a bus-factory worker in the battle-worn Polish city of Olawa, wanted desperately to get Irene and their three children out from under the repression of the country's Communist regime. But to discourage defection, the Polish government almost never allowed families to leave together, and the Iron Curtain was heavily guarded. So Andrej plotted to take his youngest child, 3-year-old Alec, on a legal, ten-day vacation to Austria—then seek asylum at a refugee camp in the town of Traiskirchen, 15 miles south of Vienna. He would take his chances on whether the Polish government would let the rest of his family follow.

It was at Camp Traiskirchen that photographer Sean Kernan and I met Andrej and Alec, while preparing to make a documentary film for CBS-TV about families emigrating to the United States. The camp's atmosphere was laced with resignation and fear, but the Bozeks were different. "Even in their stateless condition, Andrej seemed calm, almost confident," Kernan recalls. Alec was beguiling and "seemed completely comfortable in the world. He didn't complain and he immediately engaged with everyone and everything."

In the United States, it was the high season of Watergate, and the refugee camp echoed with rumors of an imminent U.S. government collapse. The Bozeks, who spoke no English, were unfazed. With the guidance of an English-speaking refugee, they spent hours studying a children's book of United States history.

Rumors of collapse notwithstanding, the U.S. government would receive more than 130,000 refugees the next year. In December 1974, after five months at Traiskirchen, the Bozeks' wait was suddenly over: Andrej received a letter that began, "You have been accepted by the United States of America."

He told his wife the news in a letter, just as he had told her of his defection, promising that the family would be reunited in the United States—eventually. Irene was not mollified. "I was so angry with him . . . that he took away my baby, and I might not be able to see them," she recalls. "I was crying and I was mad."

she reapplied to the Polish government for a family passport.

On August 4, 1976, CBS broadcast *To America*, featuring Andrej and Alec Bozek and two other emigrant families from Poland.

In early September, the police summoned Irene Bozek.

"When I go in, it is the same man who told me 'no' before, but now he is smiling and very friendly to me," she says. He told her to apply for the passports in Wroclaw, 18 miles away. She was euphoric. "I was flying from the stairs of that police office, so high I don't know how I will get down," she says. Visas from the U.S. consulate in Warsaw

He told his wife the news in a letter, promising that the family would reunite in the United States—eventually.

Texas seemed "like a tropical country" when he first arrived, says Andrej (left: with Alec in 1975; right: the two in 2009). "It was a gift to me, to travel the immigrant's path to America with this family," says photographer Sean Kernan (below: in 2009).

Andrej and Alec arrived in New York City on January 29, 1975. A refugee agency sent them to Perth Amboy, New Jersey, where they shared, with another refugee, a room over a Polish bar. Work and child care were scarce. After about four months, a regular at the bar advised Andrej to "go west." Research by Helen Whitney, an associate producer of our film, led him to Fredericksburg, Texas, west of Austin. Within days of arriving, "Andy" had a new name and a job in construction, and "Alex" had playmates, cowboy boots and a bevy of surrogate mothers.

That July, Irene applied for Polish passports for herself, her 12-year old-son, Darius, and her daughter, Sylvia, 5. "The man at the police station said, 'Forget that,' " she says. She went to the U.S. consulate in Warsaw to seek visas, and an official there told her that her husband's participation in our film—which the State Department knew about—would doom her chances of getting out of Poland. "This was the first time I had heard about a movie," Irene says. "That depressed me even more." Still, followed. No one has ever offered an official explanation for the Polish government's sudden change of heart.

Thus the Bozek family was reunited on November 28, 1976. Amid the crowd at New York City's Kennedy International Airport, which included our camera crew, Irene spotted Andy before he spotted her. He was wearing a ten-gallon hat.

Today, Andy Bozek, 71, is retired from the Texas highways department, where he worked for 18 years. Irene, 63, works for a custom bookbinder in Austin, where they own a house. They raise and sell tropical fish. Darius, 45, is vice president of a fish-food company in Southern California, where he lives with his partner, Thea, and their 3-year-old son, Darius. Sylvia, 39, lives with her parents and maintains tropical aquariums for clients. Alec, 38, also lives in Austin, with his wife, Nicole. He is seeking work, having been laid off last October from a job assembling tools for making semiconductor chips.

"If it had been me, we would still be in Poland," Irene says. "I am the worrier. Andy, he never worries about nothing."

"I know my plan would work for whole family," he says. "And now you can see right here."

DEWITT SAGE *has been a documentry filmmaker since 1968. His most recent film is* Ernest Hemingway, Rivers to the Sea.

SEAN KERNAN (3)

YOUR SMITHSONIAN.COM

READER CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR WEB SITE

YOUR KIND OF TOWN

BY THOMAS R. MARGENAU • SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN

DRIVING INTO MY HOMETOWN on old Highway 42, you passed under a huge sign that let visitors know Sheboygan considered itself the Bratwurst Capital of America. The smell of sizzling sausage from hundreds of backyard fryers permeated the town's air all summer long like a nonstop Oktoberfest. (If you're from Sheboygan, they're called "brat fryers," not barbecue grills.) I remember having brats at least two or three times a week. Boasting a gorgeous lakeshore, a renowned art center and a championship golf course, Sheboygan nowadays shows up on "Best Places to Live or Retire" lists. Despite this, and though the overpass sign is long gone, many of us remember it as the "wurst city in America."

Submit a **Your Kind of Town** story or photograph and find others at Smithsonian.com/yourkindoftown

WHERE IS THE DINOSAUR CAPITAL OF THE WORLD?

◀ PRIDE OF TEXAS

Glen Rose, Texas, is an obvious choice because of the dinosaur trackways (left: a footprint). It is the home of Dinosaur Valley State Park, Fossilmania—the nation's largest fossil sales event—and Dinosaur World, with over 100 dinosaur models on display.

—Boo Summers, of Glen Rose, on the Dinosaur Tracking blog, Smithsonian.com/dinosaurcapital

OH, CANADA ▶

Drumheller, Alberta, and Dinosaur Provincial Park are World Heritage sites. In the park you can't walk anywhere without tripping over dinosaur fossils. And Drumheller's Royal Tyrrell Museum collection (right) beats a footprint trail.

—Melanie Lievre Lorenscheit, of Edmonton, Alberta

POLL

DUELING DINOSAURS

Join the fray sparked by Dinosaur Tracking blogger Brian Switek, who asks what place has the strongest claim to being the world dinosaur capital. "Naturally," he writes, "it depends on whom you ask." So we're asking. Here are the results so far of a related poll:

DRUMHELLER, CANADA	74%
GLEN ROSE, TEXAS	23%
LIAONING, CHINA	2%
OTHER	2%

VOTE AT
Smithsonian.com/dinosaur-poll by September 9.

PHOTO CONTEST

"This incredible bird flew within two feet of me and landed on a twig. I almost fainted with happiness."

—Pam Wood, of Watsonville, California, on the Andean Cock-of-the-Rock she photographed in the San Diego Wild Animal Park.

Visit our Web site to submit a photo to our 7th annual contest.

SAMUEL CASTRO / THE SHEBOYGAN PRESS; CHRIS BARTON TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY / PHOTOGRAPHERSDIRECT.COM; AGE FOTOSTOCK / PHOTOLIBRARY; PAM WOOD

For the winner of the August caption contest go to Smithsonian.com/caption

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES
MOMENTOUS OR MERELY MEMORABLE

BY ALISON McLEAN

50 YEARS AGO
SMASHING SUCCESS

On September 14, 1959, *Luna 2*, a Soviet probe loaded with scientific equipment and a USSR pennant, crashes into the moon to become the first spacecraft to reach the lunar surface. Says one American astronomer of the moonshot—which neatly coincides with Nikita Khrushchev's U.S. tour—"good science, good technology and good theatre."

230 YEARS AGO
NO GUTS NO GLORY

In an attempt to disrupt English shipping during the Revolutionary War, Continental Navy Capt. John Paul Jones attacks the frigate *Serapis* off the English coast September 23, 1779. In the heated 3 1/2-hour battle, Jones' own ship, *Bonhomme Richard*, is badly hit. His retort when asked to surrender—"I have not yet begun to fight"—won't be reported for 46 years, but whatever his words, fight Jones does, winning both the battle with the *Serapis* and the sobriquet "Father of the American Navy."

70 YEARS AGO AND SO IT BEGINS

On orders from Adolf Hitler, Germany unleashes 1.5 million troops on Poland by land and air September 1, 1939. Two days later Britain and France, their demand for withdrawal ignored, declare war on Germany, and World War II is on. The United States' neutrality in the conflict, declared on September 5, will be blown to bits two years later by the bombing of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

25 YEARS AGO FIT TO PRINT

While researching the ways genetic variations are inherited, British geneticist Alec Jeffreys, 34, discovers DNA fingerprints, repeated sequences of DNA that vary from person to person. Reviewing his data on September 10, 1984, Jeffreys recalls he "took one look, thought 'what a complicated mess', then suddenly realised we had patterns." Within months DNA fingerprints are used to prove family links in immigration cases; in 1986, they alter the future of criminal investigation by proving the innocence of a murder suspect. Jeffreys is knighted in 1994.

400 YEARS AGO UP THE RIVER

Henry Hudson, hired by the Dutch East India Company to find a new passage to the Orient, sails his ship *Half Moon*, on September 12, 1609, into the river that will bear his name. He and his crew are the first Europeans to explore the 150 miles of the "River of Mountains," as Hudson dubs it, from today's New York City to Albany. They trade for furs with—and kidnap—local Indians and establish Dutch priority in the region.

NASA (LUNA 2); GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK; POPPERFOTO / GETTY IMAGES; DAVID BURGES / TELEGRAPH MEDIA GROUP LIMITED; NORTH WIND PICTURE ARCHIVES / PHOTOLIBRARY

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Important Risk Information About VYTORIN: VYTORIN is a prescription tablet and isn't right for everyone, including women who are nursing or pregnant or who may become pregnant, and anyone with liver problems.

Unexplained muscle pain or weakness could be a sign of a rare but serious side effect and should be reported to your doctor right away. VYTORIN may interact with other medicines or certain foods, increasing your risk of getting this serious side effect. So tell your doctor about any other medications you are taking.

Your doctor may do simple blood tests before and during treatment with VYTORIN to check for liver problems. Side effects included headache, muscle pain, and diarrhea. You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please read the more detailed information about VYTORIN on the adjacent page.

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To find out if you qualify, call 1-800-347-7503.

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VYTORIN® (EZETIMIBE/SIMVASTATIN) TABLETS
PATIENT INFORMATION ABOUT *VYTORIN* (VI-tor-in)

Generic name: ezetimibe/simvastatin tablets

Read this information carefully before you start taking VYTORIN. Review this information each time you refill your prescription for VYTORIN as there may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or your treatment. If you have any questions about VYTORIN, ask your doctor. Only your doctor can determine if VYTORIN is right for you.

WHAT IS *VYTORIN*?

VYTORIN is a medicine used to lower levels of total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, and fatty substances called triglycerides in the blood. In addition, VYTORIN raises levels of HDL (good) cholesterol. VYTORIN is for patients who cannot control their cholesterol levels by diet and exercise alone. You should stay on a cholesterol-lowering diet while taking this medicine.

VYTORIN works to reduce your cholesterol in two ways. It reduces the cholesterol absorbed in your digestive tract, as well as the cholesterol your body makes by itself. VYTORIN does not help you lose weight. VYTORIN has not been shown to reduce heart attacks or strokes more than simvastatin alone.

WHO SHOULD NOT TAKE *VYTORIN*?

Do not take VYTORIN:

- If you are allergic to ezetimibe or simvastatin, the active ingredients in VYTORIN, or to the inactive ingredients. For a list of inactive ingredients, see the "Inactive ingredients" section at the end of this information sheet.
- If you have active liver disease or repeated blood tests indicating possible liver problems.
- If you are pregnant, or think you may be pregnant, or planning to become pregnant or breast-feeding.
- If you are a woman of childbearing age, you should use an effective method of birth control to prevent pregnancy while using VYTORIN.

VYTORIN has not been studied in children under 10 years of age.

WHAT SHOULD I TELL MY DOCTOR BEFORE AND WHILE TAKING *VYTORIN*?

Tell your doctor right away if you experience unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness. This is because on rare occasions, muscle problems can be serious, including muscle breakdown resulting in kidney damage.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of VYTORIN.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems.

Taking VYTORIN with certain substances can increase the risk of muscle problems. It is particularly important to tell your doctor if you are taking any of the following:

- cyclosporine
- danazol
- antifungal agents (such as itraconazole or ketoconazole)
- fibric acid derivatives (such as gemfibrozil, bezafibrate, or fenofibrate)
- the antibiotics erythromycin, clarithromycin, and telithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors (such as indinavir, nelfinavir, ritonavir, and saquinavir)
- the antidepressant nefazodone
- amiodarone (a drug used to treat an irregular heartbeat)
- verapamil (a drug used to treat high blood pressure, chest pain associated with heart disease, or other heart conditions)
- large doses (≥1 g/day) of niacin or nicotinic acid
- large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

It is also important to tell your doctor if you are taking coumarin anticoagulants (drugs that prevent blood clots, such as warfarin).

Tell your doctor about any prescription and nonprescription medicines you are taking or plan to take, including natural or herbal remedies.

Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions including allergies.

Tell your doctor if you:

- drink substantial quantities of alcohol or ever had liver problems. VYTORIN® (ezetimibe/simvastatin) may not be right for you.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. Do not use VYTORIN if you are pregnant, trying to become pregnant or suspect that you are pregnant. If you become pregnant while taking VYTORIN, stop taking it and contact your doctor immediately.
- are breast-feeding. Do not use VYTORIN if you are breast-feeding.

Tell other doctors prescribing a new medication that you are taking VYTORIN.

HOW SHOULD I TAKE *VYTORIN*?

- Take VYTORIN once a day, in the evening, with or without food.
- Try to take VYTORIN as prescribed. If you miss a dose, do not take an extra dose. Just resume your usual schedule.
- Continue to follow a cholesterol-lowering diet while taking VYTORIN. Ask your doctor if you need diet information.
- Keep taking VYTORIN unless your doctor tells you to stop. If you stop taking VYTORIN, your cholesterol may rise again.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IN CASE OF AN OVERDOSE?

Contact your doctor immediately.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF *VYTORIN*?

See your doctor regularly to check your cholesterol level and to check for side effects. Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start taking VYTORIN and during treatment.

In clinical studies patients reported the following common side effects while taking VYTORIN: headache, muscle pain, and diarrhea (see What should I tell my doctor before and while taking VYTORIN?).

The following side effects have been reported in general use with VYTORIN or with ezetimibe or simvastatin tablets (tablets that contain the active ingredients of VYTORIN):

- allergic reactions including swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat that may cause difficulty in breathing or swallowing (which may require treatment right away), rash, hives; raised red rash, sometimes with target-shaped lesions; joint pain; muscle pain; alterations in some laboratory blood tests; liver problems (sometimes serious); inflammation of the pancreas; nausea; dizziness; tingling sensation; depression; gallstones; inflammation of the gallbladder; trouble sleeping; poor memory.

Tell your doctor if you are having these or any other medical problems while on VYTORIN. This is not a complete list of side effects. For a complete list, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT *VYTORIN*

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use VYTORIN for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give VYTORIN to other people, even if they have the same condition you have. It may harm them.

This summarizes the most important information about VYTORIN. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your pharmacist or doctor for information about VYTORIN that is written for health professionals. For additional information, visit the following web site: vytorin.com.

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Issued May 2009

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Around the Mall

SCENES AND SIGHTINGS FROM THE SMITHSONIAN MUSEUMS AND BEYOND

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OBJECT LESSONS

CANADIAN INSTALLATION ARTIST BRIAN JUNGEN FINDS HIDDEN MEANINGS IN EVERYTHING FROM SNEAKERS TO SOFAS

PAGE 20

Jungen (at Munich's Museum Villa Stuck in 2007) crafted a whale skeleton from old plastic chairs.

FROM THE CASTLE | Smithsonian 2.0

G. WAYNE CLOUGH

I ASKED A GROUP OF NEW MILLENNIALS—the generation born in the 1980s and later—how the Smithsonian might better reach them. "Surprise me," one young woman answered, underscoring why we must make our behind-the-scenes resources—staff experts, huge collections and extensive research—more visible and directly accessible. Those resources join together in the ongoing creative process, itself fascinating, that supports exhibitions and public programs—the tip of the iceberg. Researchers at the Mpala Research Center in Kenya certainly surprised me during a recent visit. Elephants, giraffes and other large animals are obviously important in the web of life there. But it is ants—and the fungus they grow inside the essential acacia bushes—that play a key role in keeping grasslands healthy.

Surprise! It's the ants in the acacia that keep the grasslands healthy.

The Smithsonian Institution is undergoing transformative changes in response to the Web, and staging innovations—such as online conferences—never before possible. The first, on Abraham Lincoln, was attended by thousands of teachers and students in 75 countries. The next conference, from September 29 through October 1, will be about global climate change. Participants will interact with Smithsonian ecologists, tropical biologists and paleontologists, among numerous other experts, and take part in real-time virtual field trips. To view the Lincoln conference, to register for the upcoming climate change conference and to learn about the many other Smithsonian educational programs, visit Smithsonianeducation.org.

The need for such programs is urgent. In rankings of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's 30 free-market countries, American 15-year-olds came in 21st in science and 25th in math. Only 71 percent of our students graduate from high school in four years. The Smithsonian can inspire students by connecting them with astrophysicists studying stars, biologists tracking carbon sequestration in rain forests and ecologists monitoring the Chesapeake Bay.

Key supporters are helping. Recent gifts from Regents Alan Spoon and Robert Kogod will support our Web activities and, of utmost importance, allow us to better integrate our varied education efforts. The Smithsonian National Board is supporting interactive Web methods and digital technology projects involving outside organizations and individuals. The Smithsonian American Art Museum, for example, is working with Cisco to help educators use Web 2.0 tools to integrate art into subjects across school curricula. This initiative is especially timely since arts programs are often the first to go during budget cuts. Ours is a time for rethinking the role of the Smithsonian—a time for turning the iceberg upside down.

G. WAYNE CLOUGH *is Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.*

Smithsonian Institution

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G. Wayne Clough

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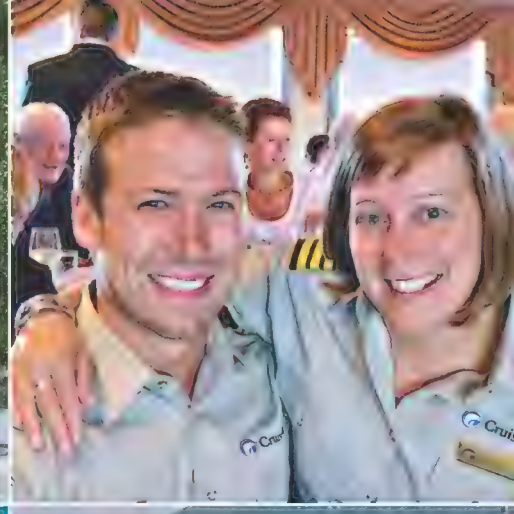

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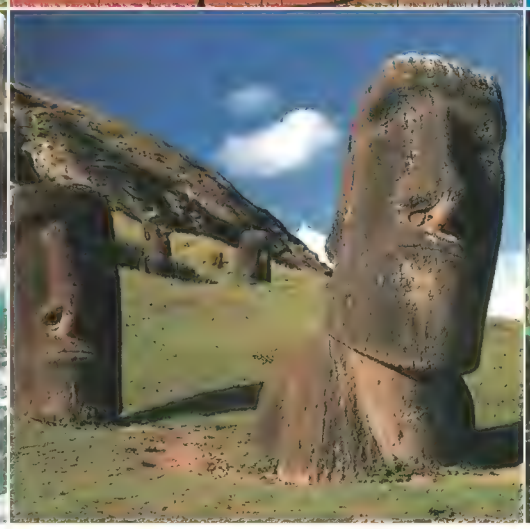
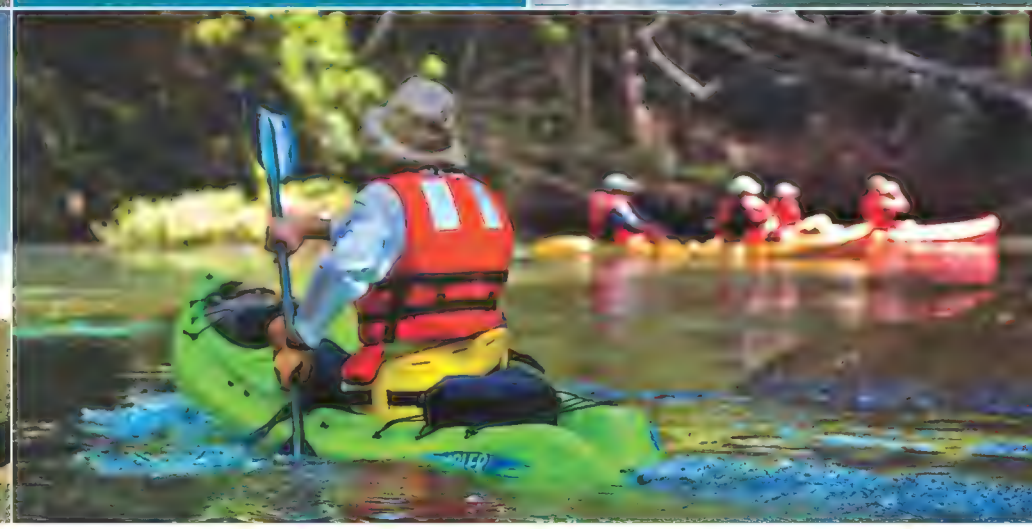

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BACK TO BASICS

TRANSFORMING EVERYDAY ITEMS INTO NATIVE AMERICAN ARTWORK, BRIAN JUNGEN BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND MASS CULTURES

BRIAN JUNGEN WANTED TO GET OUT of his Vancouver studio and spend some time outdoors. In April 2008, he headed for Australia and pitched camp on Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbor. There, as he gazed upward, two things caught his eye: the night sky, filled with constellations unlike any he had seen in the Northern Hemisphere, and the steady traffic of airplanes. "The island was directly in line with Sydney International Airport," he recalls.

With astronomy and air travel on his mind, he bought and tore apart luggage to create sculptures inspired by the animals that Australia's indigenous aborigines saw in constellations—including an alligator with a spine fashioned from the handles of carry-on bags and a shark boasting a fin sculpted from the gray exterior of a Samsonite suitcase. Two months later, the menagerie was hanging from a 26- by 20-foot mobile, *Crux*, at Australia's contemporary arts festival.

There's an old belief, shared by many cultures, that a sculpture is hidden within a block of uncut stone, just waiting for an artist to reveal it. Jungen, 39, likely would agree: the half-Dunne-za (a Canadian Indian tribe), half-Swiss installation artist has a gift for seeing images in mundane objects. "When a product breaks, it's kind of liberated in my eyes," says Jungen. In 1997, when the Dunne-za chief council began distributing funds from a land claims settlement among tribal members, the artist noticed that some of them were using the money to buy leather couches. "I thought it was this crazy icon of wealth," he says. "But there's a lot of hide in them." Jungen dismantled 11 Natuzzi sofas and built a massive tepee with the leather and wood.

In 2000, Jungen began noticing all the broken white, molded-plastic patio chairs being put out for trash on curbsides. At the time, he says, he was reading about the history of whaling, and "everything kind of clicked." Hence, *Shapeshifter* (2000), *Cetology* (2002) and *Vienna* (2003)—three 21- to 40-foot-long whale skeletons made with plastic "bones" carved out of the chairs. Next month, Jungen will become the first living artist to have a solo exhibition at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C. "Brian Jungen: Strange Comfort" opens on October 16. (*Crux*, the centerpiece, will be installed in the Potomac Atrium, the museum's soaring rotunda.)

Sitting in a fifth-floor conference room at the museum wearing a T-shirt, camouflage cargo shorts and Adidas trail runners, Jungen displays a teenage spirit that belies his age. It's as if his surname, which translates to "youth" in Swiss German, is prophetic—right down to his subtle mohawk hairstyle and timid smile that reveals braces on his teeth.

Jungen is intrigued by the way sports fill society's need for ceremony (above: a mask made of basketball shoes).

Jungen considers his work a "return to the use of whatever a Native American artist has at his disposal." He credits his Dunne-za side of the family for his resourcefulness. As a kid in northeastern British Columbia, he'd watch his relatives recycle different household objects to extend their usefulness. In his early years, he dabbled in just about every artistic medium. Then, on a 1998 visit to New York City, Jungen saw some red, white and black Nike Air Jordan basketball shoes in a store window. They were the traditional colors of the Haida, an indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest coast. Meticulously restitching the shoes into ceremonial masks, the "wizardly craftsman," as *New York Times* art critic Grace Glueck called him, fashioned shoe tongues into curled ears, reinforced toes into chins and Nike swooshes into eyes.

Jungen gravitates toward such items because he's interested in the way professional sports fill the need for ceremony within the larger culture of society. In doing so, say the critics, he bridges the gap between indigenous and mass cultures.

NMAI curator Paul Chaat Smith agrees. "He's found a way to talk about an Indian experience using new materials and new ideas in a way that opens up a space for a lot of artists, native and otherwise," says Smith. MEGAN GAMBINO

TREVOR MILLS / VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

See a gallery of Brian Jungen's artwork at Smithsonian.com/jungen

Ship's Compass

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY

ATTACK AT SEA

A WWII sailor's memento recalls a harrowing ordeal

BY OWEN EDWARDS

Merchant seaman Waldemar Semenov (left: after being rescued, in the suit he donned before abandoning ship) used the compass (below) to steer toward safety.

A SMALL, seemingly unprepossessing device—a compass four and a half inches in diameter—testifies to a story of war and remembrance, resolve and survival. The artifact is one among scores showcased in a major permanent exhibition at the National Museum of American History, "On the Water: Stories from Maritime America," which opened this past May.

Retired merchant seaman Waldemar Semenov, 95, donated the compass in 2005. In 1942, Semenov, a Russian immigrant, was serving as a junior engineer on the American merchant ship SS *Alcoa Guide*, sailing from New Jersey to the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe with a cargo of supplies and equipment for the West Indies. On the night of April 16, about 300 miles east of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, a German submarine, the U-123, surfaced and opened fire with its deck cannon. "We didn't have any guns, and there was no escort," Semenov recalls. "We didn't have much speed. They used us as target practice."

In the first six months of 1942, German submarines sank 400 ships in the Atlantic. At the time, my family was living in a house on the New Jersey shore. I was only 4, but I vividly recall my father waking my older brother and me in the middle of the night, wrapping us in blankets and taking us down to the beach. He pointed to flickering lights on the horizon. "Remember this," he said. "Those are the flames of ships torpedoed by the Germans."

The *Alcoa Guide* was unarmed, but its captain, Samuel Cobb, tried to ram the sub; he was easily outmaneuvered. Before long, Cobb was wounded, the ship was on fire and beginning to sink, and the crew was scrambling on deck to lower two lifeboats and a raft into the water.

Semenov says he stayed calm; this was not his first exposure to combat. "I had been in Spain during the civil war," he says. In waters off England, he adds, "the ship next to us had been hit by German planes, so I'd seen bombing and shooting before. I wanted to size up the situation."

Semenov returned to his cabin and put on a new suit and an overcoat, even taking some time to decide between two neckties. A photograph taken later in a lifeboat attests to his account—Semenov's fedora looks the worse for a night of rain, but his suit and carefully knotted tie are surprisingly presentable. By then Semenov had given his overcoat to a crew member who had rushed on deck in his underwear.

Before getting in a lifeboat, Semenov also had gone to the galley and snatched up three loaves of bread. "I knew we might be in the lifeboats for a while," he says, "and the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

WALDEMAR SEMENOV / NMAH, SI; HAROLD DORWIN, SI

Q&A

Actor **TOM CAVANAGH**, 45, is host of the Smithsonian Channel's award-winning series "Stories From the Vaults." Cavanagh, best known for his role in the TV comedy series "Ed," spoke to Beth Py-Lieberman.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO GET ACCESS TO PARTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T?

I take that responsibility very seriously because it's not just a pleasure jaunt. I want to bring a unique experience to viewers and track down artifacts that they would find especially interesting.

YOU HAVE DEGREES IN ENGLISH, BIOLOGY AND EDUCATION. DO YOU DRAW ON THIS EXPERTISE IN THE SHOW?

Funny guys can be smart. At least, sometimes. I can hold my own when we're discussing the environment, invertebrate zoology or biodiversity.

YOU DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH?

Yeah. On the nights before filming, it's like cramming for a college exam all over again. I might not know much about mummification, but I'm going to spend three or four hours finding out everything I can. That way, I can ask pertinent questions—and show that I respect the curators' expertise.

YOU SEEM TO ENJOY JOKING AROUND WITH CURATORS.

The easiest way to make a difficult topic accessible is through humor. I think there was some trepidation at the beginning—you know, "Who's this actor?" But once the curators realized we were taking the subject matter seriously, they began to enjoy it. There is no rule against having fun while learning.

IS THE HUMOR IMPROVISED OR SCRIPTED?

I never script it. It just comes to me. And I have to say, the curators are more than an even match for me.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE ARTIFACT?

Oh boy, I really couldn't pick. How do you choose between listening to an accomplished musician playing a Stradivarius violin one day and then standing in front of Alan Shepard's spacesuit the next? There are so many objects, it's incredible.

ANY ARTIFACTS FROM YOUR CAREER THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE AT THE SMITHSONIAN?

I don't think that I have anything worthy. Though I like to believe that one day there will be something of mine that the Smithsonian would like to have.

Read more of our interview with Tom Cavanagh at Smithsonian.com/cavanagh

OBJECT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

rations in the boats wouldn't be enough."

As the burning ship sank lower in the water and the lifeboats and raft pulled away, the crew could see the submarine illuminated by flames, its deck gun now silent. "They didn't fire at the lifeboats," Semenov recalls. "In those days, everyone played by the rules."

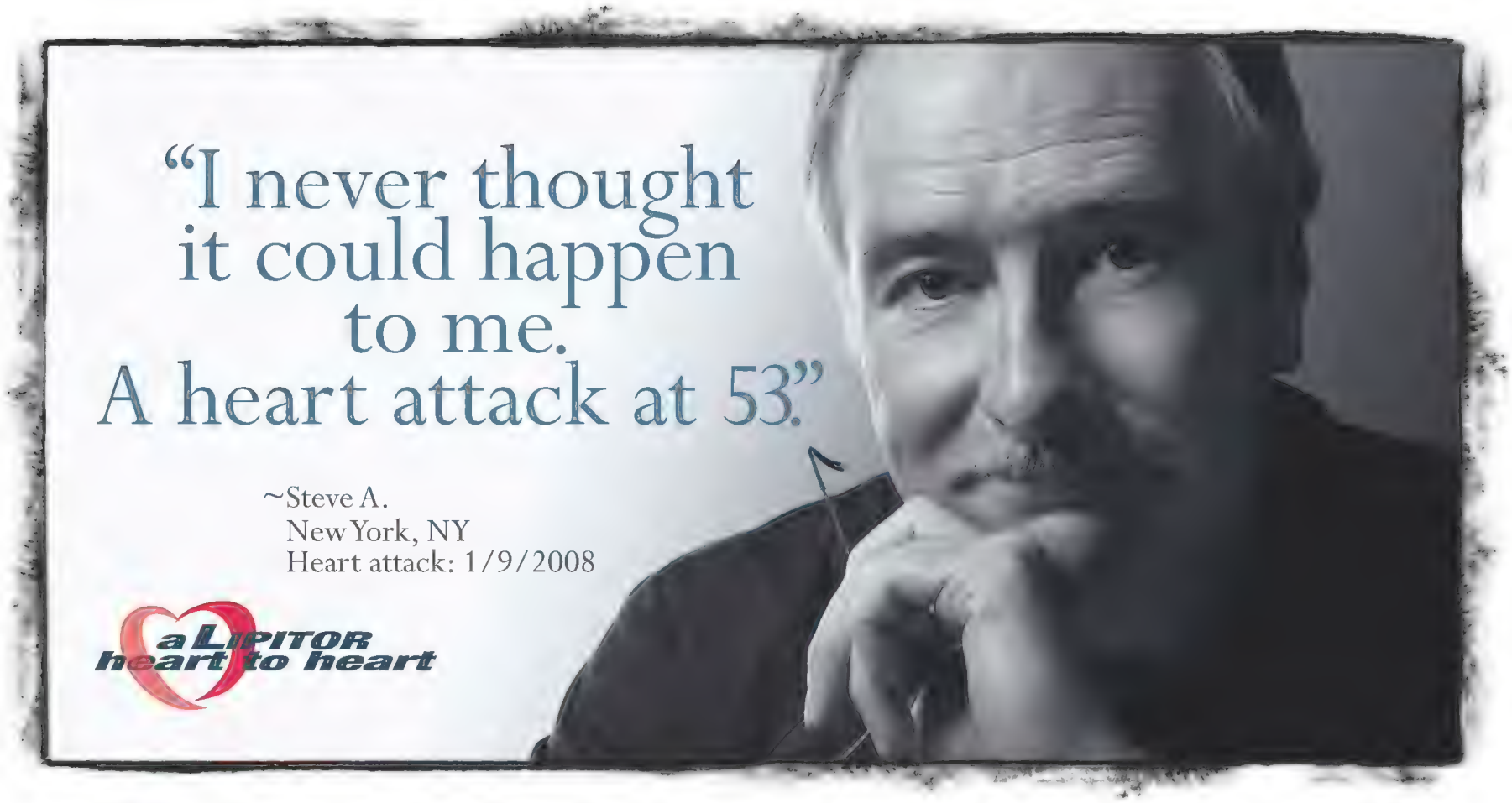
Using the small compass on the lifeboat, the survivors sailed west by northwest toward the shipping lanes. After three days, a patrol plane, searching for sailors from any of the half-dozen ships sunk that week, spotted Semenov's lifeboat. The next day, after a night of heavy rain, the American destroyer USS *Broome* rescued the men and soon picked up the other lifeboat and its survivors. (The raft was found three weeks after the sinking, with only one man still alive. Captain Cobb had died in the other lifeboat and was buried at sea, along with a crew member who had been killed in the shelling.) In all, 27 *Alcoa Guide* crew members survived; seven perished.

During preparations for the NMAH exhibition, about U.S. shipbuilding efforts during the world wars, curator Paula Johnson heard about Semenov's wartime experiences while touring the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association at the Calhoon Engineering School near Easton, Maryland. She visited Semenov at his home on Long Island in New York. "He told me his remarkable story; when I asked if the museum could have the compass, he immediately said yes."

Not long after his return to port, Semenov enlisted in the Army and served as an engineer on troopships and supply ships with both the Army and Navy in the Atlantic and Pacific. He continued to serve in the military and as a merchant seaman until 1987. Semenov's nemesis, the U-123, was intentionally scuttled by the Germans off the coast of France in 1944, but was salvaged by the French Navy. Rechristened the *Blaison*, the sub remained in service until 1959.

OWEN EDWARDS *is a freelance writer and author of the book* Elegant Solutions.

SELDIN GROSS COMMUNICATIONS



"I had been feeling fine. But turns out my cholesterol and other risk factors* increased my chance of a heart attack. Now I trust my heart to Lipitor. Talk to your doctor about your risk and about Lipitor."

- **Adding Lipitor may help, when diet and exercise are not enough. Unlike some other cholesterol-lowering medications, Lipitor is FDA-approved to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in patients with several common risk factors, including family history, high blood pressure, low good cholesterol, age and smoking.**
- **Lipitor has been extensively studied with over 16 years of research. And Lipitor is backed by 400 ongoing or completed clinical studies.**

*Patient's risk factors include age, gender, smoking, and high blood pressure.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: LIPITOR is a prescription drug. It is used in patients with multiple risk factors for heart disease such as family history, high blood pressure, age, low HDL ('good' cholesterol) or smoking to reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke and certain kinds of heart surgeries. When diet and exercise alone are not enough, LIPITOR is used along with a low-fat diet and exercise to lower cholesterol.

LIPITOR is not for everyone. It is not for those with liver problems. And it is not for women who are nursing, pregnant or may become pregnant. If you take LIPITOR, tell your doctor if you feel any new muscle pain or weakness. This could be a sign of rare but serious muscle side effects. Tell your doctor about all medications you take. This may help avoid serious drug interactions. Your doctor should do blood tests to check your liver function before and during treatment and may adjust your dose. The most common side effects are gas, constipation, stomach pain and heartburn. They tend to be mild and often go away.

LIPITOR is one of many cholesterol-lowering treatment options that you and your doctor can consider.

Please see additional important information on next page.

LIPITOR®
atorvastatin calcium
tablets

Have a heart to heart with your doctor about your risk. And about Lipitor.
Call 1-888-LIPITOR (1-888-547-4867) or visit www.lipitor.com/steve

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA.
Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

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IMPORTANT FACTS

LIPITOR atorvastatin calcium tablets (LIP-ih-tore)

LOWERING YOUR HIGH CHOLESTEROL

High cholesterol is more than just a number, it's a risk factor that should not be ignored. If your doctor said you have high cholesterol, you may be at an increased risk for heart attack. But the good news is, you can take steps to lower your cholesterol.

With the help of your doctor and a cholesterol-lowering medicine like LIPITOR, along with diet and exercise, you could be on your way to lowering your cholesterol.

Ready to start eating right and exercising more? Talk to your doctor and visit the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org.

WHO IS LIPITOR FOR?

Who can take LIPITOR:

- People who cannot lower their cholesterol enough with diet and exercise
- Adults and children over 10

Who should NOT take LIPITOR:

- Women who are pregnant, may be pregnant, or may become pregnant. LIPITOR may harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant, stop LIPITOR and call your doctor right away.
- Women who are breast-feeding. LIPITOR can pass into your breast milk and may harm your baby.
- People with liver problems
- People allergic to anything in LIPITOR

BEFORE YOU START LIPITOR

Tell your doctor:

- About all medications you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements
- If you have muscle aches or weakness
- If you drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day
- If you have diabetes or kidney problems
- If you have a thyroid problem

ABOUT LIPITOR

LIPITOR is a prescription medicine. Along with diet and exercise, it lowers "bad" cholesterol in your blood. It can also raise "good" cholesterol (HDL-C).

LIPITOR can lower the risk of heart attack or stroke in patients who have risk factors for heart disease such as:

- age, smoking, high blood pressure, low HDL-C, heart disease in the family, *or*
- diabetes with risk factor such as eye problems, kidney problems, smoking, or high blood pressure

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LIPITOR

Serious side effects in a small number of people:

- **Muscle problems** that can lead to kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your chance for muscle problems is higher if you take certain other medicines with LIPITOR.
- **Liver problems**. Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start LIPITOR and while you are taking it.

Symptoms of muscle or liver problems include:

- Unexplained muscle weakness or pain, especially if you have a fever or feel very tired
- Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pain
- Brown or dark-colored urine
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LIPITOR are:

- Headache
- Diarrhea, gas
- Rash
- Constipation
- Upset stomach and stomach pain
- Muscle and joint pain

Side effects are usually mild and may go away by themselves. Fewer than 3 people out of 100 stopped taking LIPITOR because of side effects.

HOW TO TAKE LIPITOR

Do:

- Take LIPITOR as prescribed by your doctor.
- Try to eat heart-healthy foods while you take LIPITOR.
- Take LIPITOR at any time of day, with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. But if it has been more than 12 hours since your missed dose, wait. Take the next dose at your regular time.

Don't:

- Do not change or stop your dose before talking to your doctor.
- Do not start new medicines before talking to your doctor.
- Do not give your LIPITOR to other people. It may harm them even if your problems are the same.
- Do not break the tablet.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

- Ask your doctor or health care provider.
- Talk to your pharmacist.
- Go to **www.lipitor.com** or call **1-888-LIPITOR**.

Uninsured? Need help paying for Pfizer medicines? Pfizer has programs that can help. Call **1-866-706-2400** or visit **www.PfizerHelpfulAnswers.com.**

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What's Up

WILD, WILD WEST

Saddle up and visit the National Portrait Gallery, where more than 100 photographs depicting "Faces of the Frontier," including Buffalo Bill Cody (left: in 1887) and Geronimo, go on display September 25. The exhibit also chronicles completion of the transcontinental railroad and other events.

MONSTER STORY

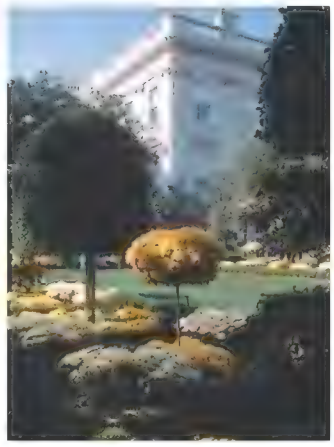
The Japanese folk tale about the battle between famed warrior Minamoto Yorimitsu and the demon Shuten Doji is immortalized in artwork, such as this 19th-century fan painting by Kawanabe Kyosai, until September 20 at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

FIRST FLORA

The Jacqueline Kennedy Garden is one of several White House gardens featured in a traveling photo and art exhibit, now at the Sonnenberg Gardens & Mansion State Historic Park in Canandaigua, New York, until Oct. 25.

WHEN WORLDS COMBINE

Andrea Carlson taps into her Ojibwe-French-Scandinavian ancestry to create art (left: *Izhitwaawin,* 2006) that combines the myths of indigenous people with European imagery. At the Smithsonian's George Gustav Heye Center in New York City through January 10.



DON'T FEED THE ARTWORK

The African Art Museum exhibits animal-inspired artifacts (a late 19th-century gong shaped like a bush cow, made by the Yangere people of the Democratic Republic of Congo) through February 21.

ABBY CALLARD

NPG, SI; KAWANABE KYOSAI / SACKLER GALLERY OF ART, SI; GEORGE GUSTAV HEYE CENTER, NMAI, SI; WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION / SITES; FRANKO KHOURY / NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART, SI

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Get an insider's look at the Smithsonian at Smithsonian.com/mallblog

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Where in the World?

BY JAN MORRIS

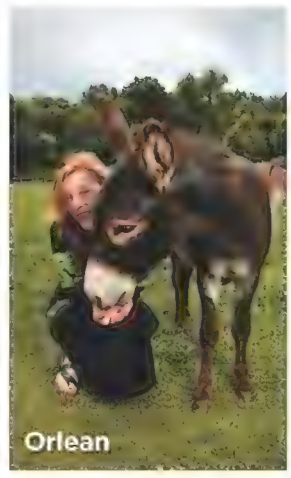
Now that nearly everyone has been nearly everywhere, it might be thought that travel writers have lost their purpose. In a way they have. Only the most spectacularly perilous journey is nowadays worth writing a book about, and a public almost surfeited with TV travelogues rarely needs to be told what foreign parts look like.

Ah, but what they *feel* like is something else, and in a profounder sense the best travel writers are not really writing about travel at all. They are recording the effects of places or movements upon their own particular temperaments—recording the *experience* rather than the event, as they might make literary use of a love affair, an enigma or a tragedy.

Theroux

Mayes

Prose


Orlean

Ward

Alexander

So it is with the six practitioners represented in this special issue—whose destinations were chosen by their answer to a single question: Where in the world would you like to go? Talk about dream assignments.

When in 1922 the novelist E.M. Forster set out to write a guidebook to the Egyptian city of Alexandria, his most memorable advice was "to wander aimlessly about." In that one famous phrase, he was admitting that the subjective means more than the objective.

I do not doubt that wandering aimlessly was part of the technique of all six of the writers in this issue; most of them are even recalling a very first travel experience. Paul Theroux, who has famously quartered the world in his time, here makes his inaugural drive from coast to coast in his American homeland. Geoff Ward grew up in India but had never traveled to Punjab, and he describes for us his sensations with the wisdom of an old hand and the excitement of a newcomer. When we hear the name of Frances Mayes we instantly think of Tuscany, but here she makes a journey across the very different landscapes of Poland. Susan Orlean looks at Morocco through the unlikely prism of a donkey's personality. Caroline Alexander, though she had been to Jamaica, chooses to write about marvelous gardens there that are new to her, and Francine Prose explores rural Japan as the most delighted and appreciative of tourists.

I would guess they approached their tasks, like Forster in Alexandria, open to all suggestions, all antennas out: but it is their technique that is aimless, not their purpose. They know exactly what they are doing, and the result is something far more complex and profound than mere wandering.

First impressions are not always best—certainly not always the most accurate. Responses are often mellower, less gushing, less bigoted, more balanced, upon a return visit. Some of the most potent evocations of places are written by people who have known them for years, so that observer and observed, so to speak, become more intricately enmeshed. But there is no denying extra freshness, extra sparkle, to a seasoned observer's first impressions. Like us, they have doubtless sniffed by proxy the cherry blossoms of Japan. But until now they have not known what those places feel like, have not matched their realities with their own imaginations.

This is not to say that these writers are exploring the treacherous creative quagmire called fiction. It is not invention that you will find in these pages, but something subtler: the alliance of knowledge and sensation, nature and intellect, sight and interpretation, instinct and logic. It is more real than fiction, but more genuine than mere fact, too. Susan Orlean is not just thinking about donkeyness, she is exploring the relationship between animal and human in North Africa. In Japan, Francine Prose is wondering why some travelers find themselves so fully at home in other people's homelands. And Geoff Ward ends his article on Punjab with the Sikh thought that all Punjabis—"and, by extension, all mankind"—are one.

Our writers are certainly not telling us what we shall see or feel ourselves, if ever we go to the parts they write about, and it is no good complaining that our own responses were different, if we happen to have been there already. For they are other minds that we are traveling with here, other sensibilities, and as any philosopher knows, the truth about anything is nobody's monopoly—not least, the truth about a place.

JAN MORRIS *has written some 40 books on history and travel.*

What is your dream destination? Tell us at smithsonian.com/dreamtravel

ULF ANDERSEN; COREY HENDRICKSON; EDWARD MAYES; DIANE WARD; PAUL HAWTHORNE / AP IMAGES; GEORGE BUTLER

Where Donkeys Deliver

The author returns to Morocco to explore the animal's central role in the life of this desert kingdom

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC SANDER

The donkey I couldn't forget

was coming around a corner in the walled city of Fez, Morocco, with six color televisions strapped to his back. If I could tell you the exact intersection where I saw him, I would do so, but pinpointing a location in Fez is a formidable challenge, a little like noting GPS coordinates in a spider web. I might be able to be more precise about where I saw the donkey if I knew how to extrapolate location using the position of the sun, but I don't. Moreover, there wasn't any sun to be seen and barely a sliver of sky, because leaning in all around me were the sheer walls of the medina—the old walled portion of Fez—where the buildings are so packed and stacked together that they seem to have been carved out of a single huge stone rather than constructed individually, clustered so tightly that they blot out the shrieking blue and silver of the Moroccan sky.

The best I can do is to say that the donkey and I met at the intersection of one path that was about as wide as a bathmat and another that was slightly larger—call it a bath sheet. The Koran actually specifies the ideal width of a road—seven cubits, or the width of three

SPECIAL ISSUE

Smithsonian

SEPTEMBER 2009 • VOLUME 40, NUMBER 6

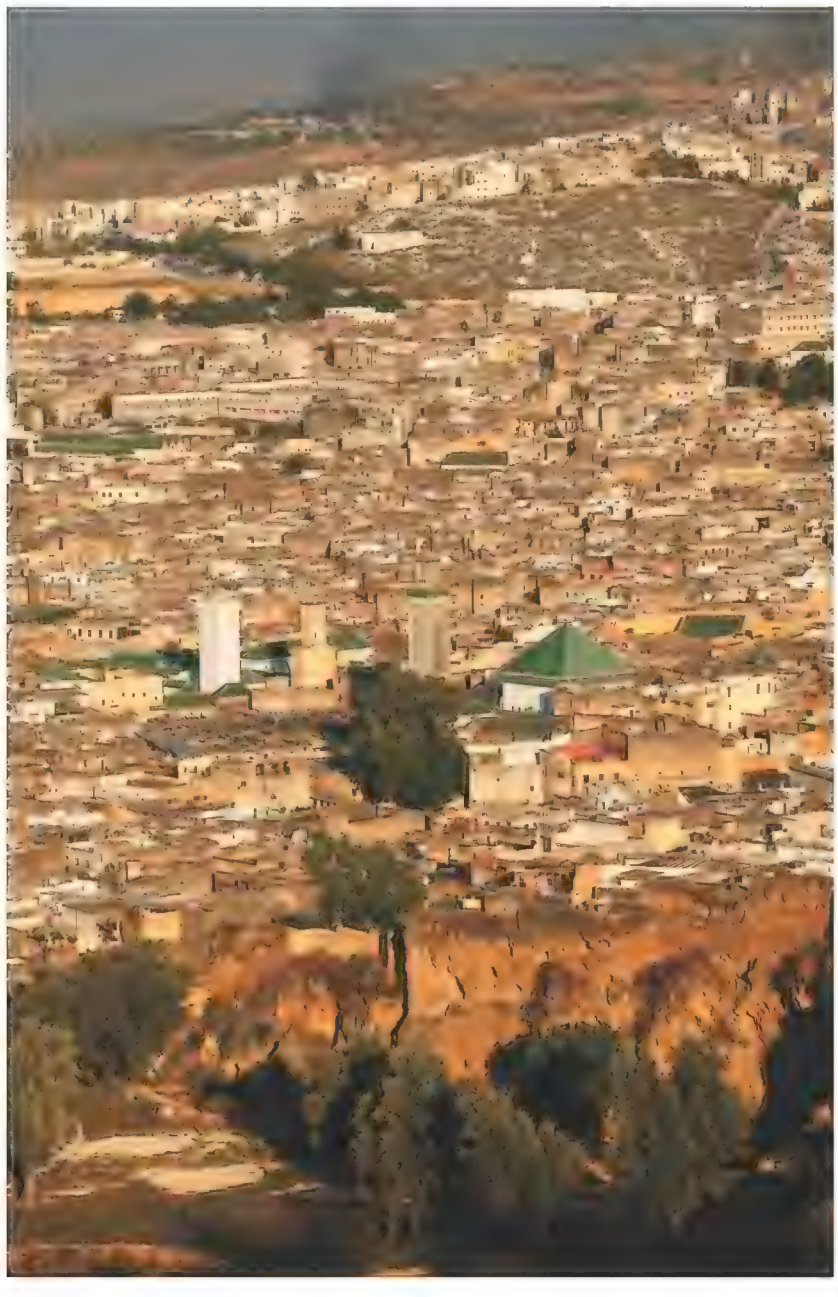
Working like "little pistons," donkeys keep the medina humming. An estimated 100,000 people in the Fez area depend on the animals for their livelihood.

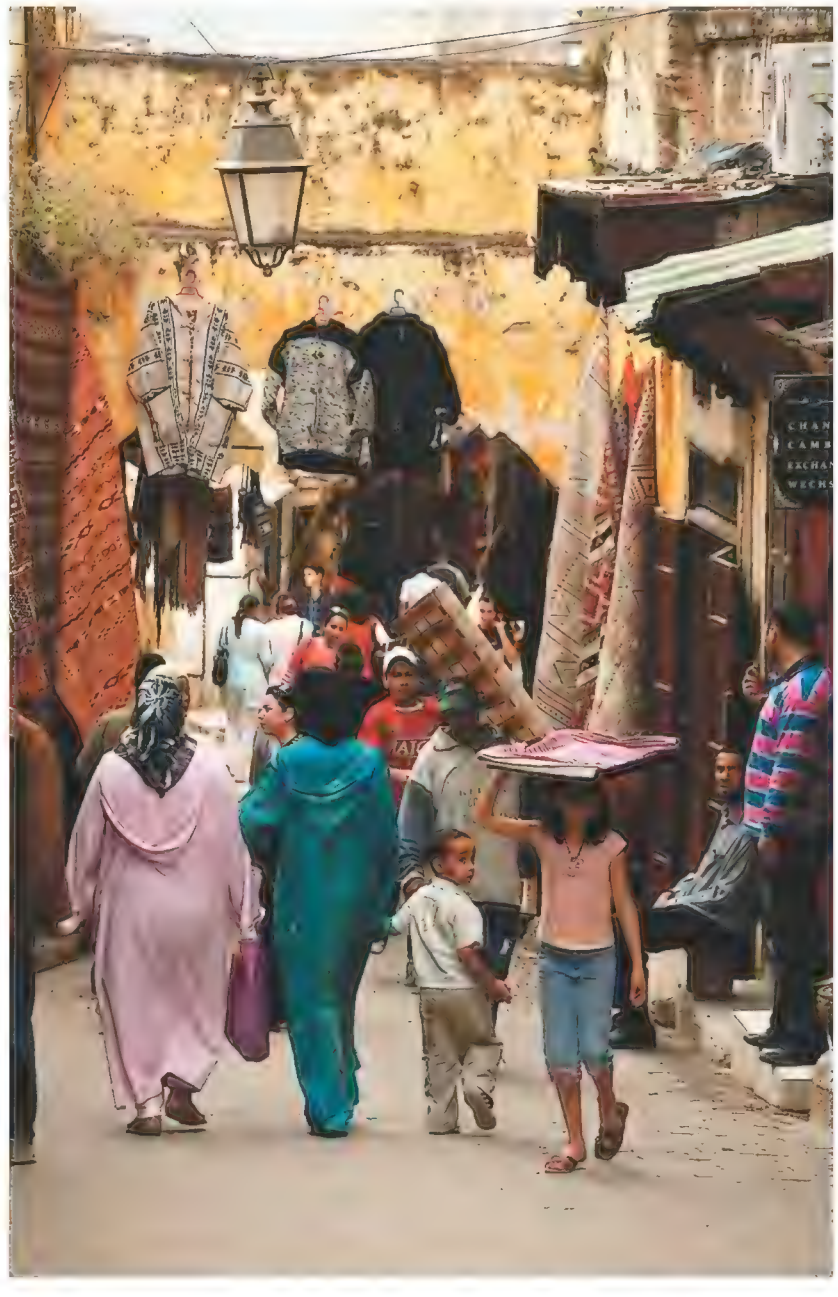
mules—but I would wager that some of Fez's paths fall below Koranic standards. They were laid out in the late eighth century by Idriss I, founder of the dynasty that spread Islam in Morocco, and they are so narrow that bumping into another person or a pushcart is no accident; it is simply the way you move forward, your progress more like a pinball than a pedestrian, bouncing from one fixed object to the next, brushing by a man chiseling names into grave markers only to slam into a drum maker stretching goat skin on a drying rack, then to carom off a southbound porter hauling luggage in a wire cart.

In the case of my meeting the donkey, the collision was low-impact. The donkey was small. His shoulders were about waist-high, no higher; his chest was narrow; his legs straight; his hooves quite delicate, about the size of a teacup. He—or she, perhaps—was donkey-colored, that is, a soft mouse gray, with a light-colored muzzle and dark brown fur bristling out of its ears. The televisions, however, were big—boxy tabletop sets, not portables. Four were loaded on the donkey's back, secured in a crazy jumble by a tangle of plastic twine and bungee cords. The remaining two were attached to the donkey's flanks, one on each side, like panniers on a bicycle. The donkey stood squarely under this staggering load. He walked along steadily, making the turn crisply and then continuing up the smaller path, which was so steep that it had little stone stairs every yard or two where the gain was especially abrupt. I caught only a glimpse of his face as he passed, but it was utterly endearing, all at once serene and weary and determined. There may have been a man walking beside him, but I was too transfixed by the sight of the donkey to remember.

This encounter was a decade ago, on my first trip to Fez, and even amid the dazzle of images and sounds you are struck with in Morocco—the green hills splattered with red poppies, the gorgeous tiled patterning on every surface, the keening call from the mosques, the swirl of Arabic letter-

Founded in the late eighth century, the city of Fez (left: map) is one of the world's most densely settled spaces. In the walled section of the city known as the medina (below left), merchants jostle for space, cramming their stalls into narrow alleys (below) where they hawk shirts, rugs, bread, lumber—and even gravestones. Navigating can be tricky, says the author: "Your progress [is] more like a pinball than a pedestrian, bouncing from one fixed object to the next."





MAP: GUILBERT GATES

ing everywhere—the donkey was what stayed with me. It was that stoic expression, of course. But even more, it was seeing, in that moment, the astonishing commingling of past and present—the timeless little animal, the medieval city and the pile of electronics—that made me believe that it was possible for time to simultaneously move forward and stand still. In Fez, at least, that seems to be true.

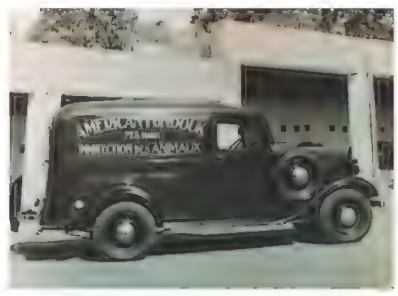
Just a mile outside Casablanca's Mohammed V Airport, on the side of a four-lane high-speed roadway, underneath a billboard for a cellular service provider, a dark-brown donkey ambled along, four huge sacks filled to bursting strapped to a makeshift harness on its back. I had been back in Morocco for less than an hour. My recollection already felt concrete—that there were donkeys everywhere in the country, that they operated like little pistons, moving people and things to and fro, defying the wave of modernity that was washing gently over the country—and that the television donkey of Fez had not been just an odd and singular anecdote.

On my first trip to Morocco, I had seen the television donkey and then countless more, trudging through Fez with loads of groceries, propane tanks, sacks of spices, bolts of fabrics, construction material. When my trip was over and I returned home, I realized I had fallen in love with donkeys in general, with the plain tenderness of their faces and their attitude of patient resignation and even their occasionally baffling, intractable moods. In the United States, most donkeys are kept as pets and their pessimism seems almost comical. In Morocco, I knew that the look of resignation was often coupled with a bleaker look of fatigue and sometimes despair, because they are work animals, worked hard and sometimes thanklessly. But seeing them as something so purposeful—not a novelty in a tourist setting but an integral part of Moroccan daily life—made me love them even more, as flea-bitten and saddle-sore and scrawny as some of them were.

The medina in Fez may well be the largest urbanized area in the world impassable to cars and trucks, where anything that a human being can't carry or push in a handcart is conveyed by a donkey, a horse or a mule. If you need lumber and rebar to add a new room to your house in the medina, a donkey will carry it in for you. If you have a heart attack while building the new room on your house, a donkey might well serve as your ambulance and carry you out. If you re-

"A donkey is just a donkey," says one unsentimental Moroccan. "I like horses." Donkeys grind through the workday, but some horses get resplendent saddles for special occasions from a medina shop.

alize your new room didn't solve the overcrowding in your house and you decide to move to a bigger house, donkeys will carry your belongings and furniture from your old house to your new one. Your garbage is picked up by donkeys; your food supplies are delivered to the medina's stores and restaurants by mule; when you decide to decamp from the tangle of the medina, donkeys might carry your luggage out or carry it back in when you decide to return. In Fez, it has always been thus, and so it will always be. No car is small enough or nimble enough to squeeze through the medina's byways; most motorbikes cannot make it up the steep, slippery alleys. The medina is now a World Heritage site. Its roads can never be widened, and they will never be changed; the donkeys might carry in computers and flat-screen televisions and satellite dishes and video equipment, but they will never be replaced.



The American Fondouk has treated the animals of Fez without charge for more than 80 years (above: the Fondouk's ambulance, c. 1936). Dr. Denys Frappier (right) and his team of helpers see as many as 100 animals a day.

I am not the first American woman to be fascinated by the working animals of the medina. In 1927, Amy Bend Bishop, wife of eccentric, wealthy gallery owner Cortlandt Field Bishop, passed through Fez on a grand tour of Europe and the Mediterranean, and was intrigued by the 40,000 donkeys and mules working at the time. She was also disturbed by their poor condition, and she donated $8,000—the equivalent of at least $100,000 today—to establish a free veterinary service in Fez. The service was named the American Fondouk—"*fondouk*" is Arabic for inn—and after a stint in temporary quarters the clinic opened up in a whitewashed compound built around a shaded courtyard on the Route de Taza, a busy highway just outside the medina, where it has operated ever since. The Fondouk has become well known in Fez, even among the animals. Dozens of times creatures have shown up at the Fondouk's massive front gate, unaccompanied, needing help; just days before I arrived, for instance, a donkey having some sort of neurological crisis stumbled in on its own. It is possible that these wanderers were left at the door by their owners before the Fondouk opened in the early morning, but Fez and Morocco and the American Fondouk all seem to be magical places, and after spending even a few hours in Fez, the idea that animals find their own way to the Fondouk's shady courtyard doesn't seem unlikely at all.

The highway from Casablanca to Fez rushes past fields and farms, along the edge of the busy cities of Rabat, the capital, and Meknes, rolling up and down golden hills and grassy valleys, lush with swaths of yellow broom and chamomile in bloom, and, dotted among them, hot red poppies. The highway looks new; it could be a freshly built road anywhere in the world, but several mules trotted across the overpasses as we zoomed underneath, claiming the image as Morocco.

King Mohammed VI makes frequent visits from Rabat to Fez; some speculate that he might relocate the capital there. The king's presence is palpable. The Fez that I encountered ten years ago was dusty, crumbling, clamorous, jammed. Since then there's been restoration at the massive royal palace; at least a dozen fountains and plazas now line a long, elegant

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boulevard where there used to be a buckling road. New development followed the royal family's interest in the city; as we headed to the Fondouk, we drove past a gaping excavation soon to be the Atlas Fez Hotel and Spa and a score of billboards touting shiny condominiums such as "Happy New World" and "Fez New Home."

But the medina looked exactly as I remembered it, the dun-colored buildings tight together, hive-like; the twisting paths disappearing into shadow; the crowds of people, slim and columnar in their hooded *jalabas*, hurrying along, dodging and sidestepping to make their way. It is rackety, bustling. I chased after my porter, who was wheeling a handcart with my luggage from the car. We had parked it outside the medina, near the gorgeous swoop of Bab Bou Jeloud, the Blue Gate, one of the handful of entryways into the walled city. In a moment, I heard someone shout, "*Balak, balak*!"—Make way, make way!—and a donkey carrying boxes marked AGRICO came up behind us, his owner continuing to holler and gesture to part the crowd. And in a few moments came another donkey, carrying rusty orange propane tanks. And in a few moments, another one, wearing a harness but carrying nothing at all, picking his way down one of the steepest little roads. As far as I could tell, the donkey was alone; there was no one in front of him or beside

him, no one behind. I wondered if he was lost, or had broken away from his handler, so I asked the porter, who looked at me with surprise. The donkey wasn't lost, the man said. He was probably done with work and on his way home.

Where do the donkeys of the medina live? Some live on farms outside the walls and are brought in for work each day, but many live inside. Before we got to my hotel, the porter stopped and knocked on a door. From the outside, it looked like any of the thousands of doorways of any of the thousands of medina houses, but the young man who answered the door led us through a foyer, where it appeared he had been practicing electric guitar, to a low-ceiling room, a bit damp but not unpleasant, the floor strewn with fava beans and salad greens and a handful of hay. A brown goat with a puppy-size newborn kid sat in a corner, observing us with a look of cross-eyed intensity. The young man said that ten donkeys lived in the house; they were stabled in the room each night, but they were all out working during the day.

Shoppers converge on Souk el Khemis-des Zemamra on Thursdays—market day—eager for bargains on the hoof (right). Prospective buyers study a donkey's teeth for signs of aging (above), prelude to the main event—haggling over price.

So a good donkey is respected and valued—it is estimated that 100,000 people in the Fez area depend in one way or another on a donkey for their livelihood—but the animals are not sentimentalized. Out of habit, every time I spoke to someone with a donkey, I asked the donkey's name. The first man I asked hesitated and then answered, "H'mar." The second man I asked also hesitated and then answered, "H'mar," and I assumed that I had just stumbled upon the most popular name in Morocco for donkeys, the way you might by chance meet several dogs in the United States named Riley or Tucker or Max. When the third told me his donkey's name was H'mar, I realized it couldn't be a coincidence, and then I learned that *H'mar* is not a name—it's just the Arabic word for donkey. In Morocco, donkeys serve, and they are cared for, but they are not pets. One afternoon, I was talking to a man with a donkey in the medina and asked him why he didn't give his donkey a name. He laughed and said, "He doesn't need a name. He's a taxi."

I woke up early to try to beat the crowd to the Fondouk. The doors open at 7:30 each morning, and usually there is a crowd of animals already outside the gate by then, waiting to be examined. I have seen old photographs of the Fondouk from the 1930s, and it is uncannily unchanged; the Route de Taza is probably busier and louder now, but the handsome white wall of the Fondouk with its enormous arched wooden door is unmistakable, as is the throng of donkeys and mules at the front door, their owners, dressed in the same somber long robes that they still wear today, close by their side. In those old pictures, as is still the case, an American flag is flying from the Fondouk's walls; it is the only place in Morocco I know of besides the U.S. Embassy to display an American flag.

SUSAN ORLEAN *is working on a biography of the canine actor Rin Tin Tin. She is considering adding a donkey to her household. Photographer* **ERIC SANDER** *lives in Paris.*

These days, the Fondouk's chief veterinarian is Denys Frappier, a silver-haired Canadian who had come to the Fondouk planning to stay just two years, but 15 years have now gone by and he has yet to manage to leave. He lives in a pleasant house within the Fondouk property—the old stables, converted to the staff residence 60 years ago—along with ten cats, nine dogs, four turtles and a donkey, all of them animals who were either left here for care by their owners, who never came to get them, or were walk-ins who never walked out. In the case of the donkey, a tiny knock-kneed creature whose Arabic name means "Trouble," he was born here but his mother died during birth, and the owner wasn't interested in taking care of a baby donkey, so he left it behind. Trouble is the Fondouk pet; he likes to visit the exam room and sometimes snuffle through the papers in the Fondouk office. An awkward, ill-built animal with a huge head and a tiny body, he was adopted by the veterinary students who were doing internships at the Fondouk; one of them used to let the newborn donkey sleep in her bed in the small student dormitory. When I arrived that morning, Trouble was following Dr. Frappier around the courtyard, watching him on his rounds. "He is nothing but trouble," Dr. Frappier said,

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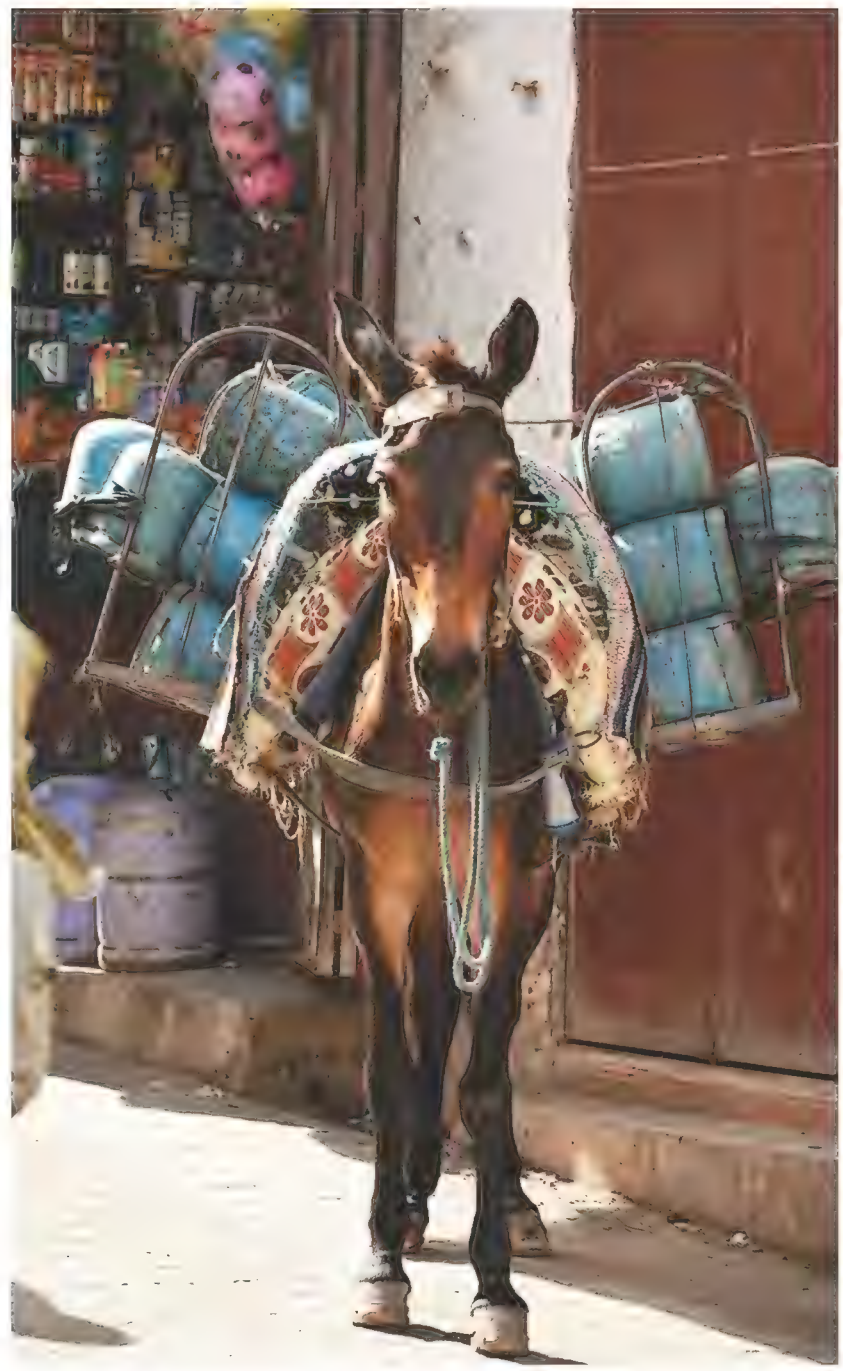
looking at the donkey with affectionate exasperation, "but what can I do?"

Previously, Dr. Frappier had been the chief veterinarian of the Canadian Olympic Equestrian Team, tending to pampered performance horses worth $100,000 or more. His patients at the Fondouk are quite different. That morning's lineup included a bony white mule who was lame; a donkey with deep harness sores and one blind eye; another donkey with knobby hips and intestinal problems; a hamster with a corneal injury; a flock of three sheep; several dogs with various aches and pains; and a newborn kitten with a crushed leg. A wrinkled old man came in just behind me, carrying a mewling lamb in a shopping bag. By 8 a.m., another six mules and donkeys had gathered in the Fondouk's courtyard, their owners clutching little wooden numbers and waiting to be called.

The Fondouk's original mission was to serve the working animals of Morocco, but long ago it began to dispense free care to all manner of living things, with the exception of cattle—a luxury in Morocco, and therefore free care seemed unnecessary—and pit bulls. "I was tired of patching them up so the owners could take them out and fight with them again," Dr. Frappier said, as he was checking the hooves of the lame mule. The mule was poorly shod, as are many of the donkeys and mules in the medina, with rubber pads cut out of old automobile tires; the corners of its mouth were rubbed raw by a harsh bit; he would have looked better if he weighed another 30 or 40 pounds. It took Frappier several years to adjust to the condition of the animals here; at first he was utterly discouraged and put in a request to resign his post and return to Montreal, but he settled in, and he has learned to sort out "dire" from "acceptable." The Fondouk has quietly pushed an agenda of better care, and in large part it has been successful: it managed to spread the word to the mule and donkey owners that sticking cactus thorns in harness sores didn't encourage the animals to work harder, and that rubbing salt in their eyes, a folk remedy to get them to walk faster, was not only ineffective but left the animals blind. There are animals everywhere you look in Fez, and in Morocco. Cats tiptoe around every corner; dogs lounge in the North African sun; even on the roaring roads of Casablanca, horse-and-buggies clatter alongside SUVs and sedans. Twelve full-time veterinarians work in Fez, but even so, on two separate occasions the royal family of Morocco, which could certainly afford any veterinarian in the world, has brought its animals to the Fondouk.



Donkeys and mules (right: under gas cans) are valued but worked hard. Asked why he didn't name his donkey, one man laughed and said, "He doesn't need a name. He's a taxi."

On my first trip to Morocco, I had heard of Souk el Khemis-des Zemamra, one of the country's largest donkey markets, held every Thursday, about two hours southwest of Casablanca, and ever since hearing of it I had wanted to go. I wanted to see the epicenter of the donkey universe in Morocco, where thousands of creatures are bought and sold and traded. A few years ago, the government began visiting Khemis-des Zemamra and the other large souks to take stock of the transactions and levy sales tax on them, and since then more of the trade has migrated away from the souks toward word-of-mouth impromptu markets, out of reach of the tax man. The number of donkeys sold in Khemis-des Zemamra these days is perhaps a third less than what it was five years ago. Still, the souks thrive—besides donkeys, of course, they sell every single food product and toiletry and household item and farm implement you could ever imagine, serving as a combination Agway, Wal-Mart, Mall of America and Stop & Shop for the entire population for miles around. If you want chickpeas or hair dye or a fishing net or a saddle or a soup pot, you can find it at the souk. If you want a donkey, you will certainly find the one you want any Thursday morning in Khemis-des Zemamra.

I set out on the five-hour drive from Fez to Khemis-des Zemamra on a Wednesday night. The market starts at the crack of dawn; by noon, when the sun is searing, the fair-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 78

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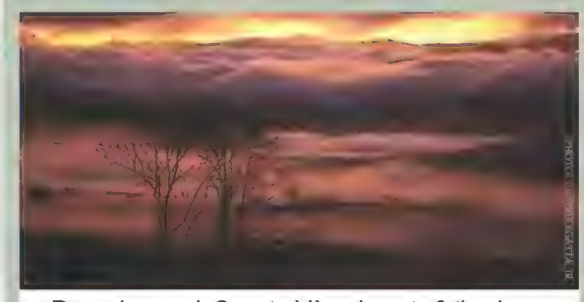

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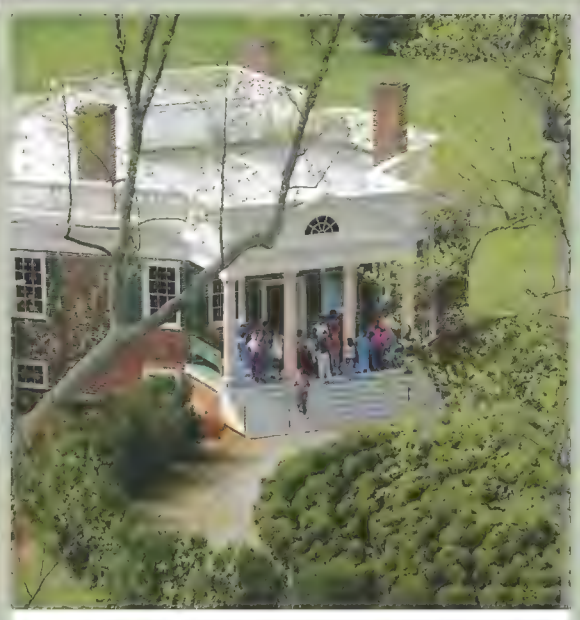

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Serene Japan

On the western coast, far from bustling Tokyo, tradition can be found in contemplative gardens, quiet inns and old temples

BY FRANCINE PROSE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HANS SAUTTER

At the Buddhist temple of Gesshoji, on the western coast of Japan, the glossy, enormous crows are louder—*much* louder—than any birds I have ever heard. Crows are famously territorial, but these in the small city of Matsue seem almost demonically possessed by the need to assert their domain and keep track of our progress past the rows of stone lanterns aligned like vigilant, lichen-spotted sentinels guarding the burial grounds of nine generations of the Matsudaira clan. The strident cawing somehow makes the gorgeous, all-but-deserted garden seem even further from the world of the living and more thickly populated by the spirits of the dead. Something about the temple grounds—their eerie beauty, the damp mossy fragrance, the gently hallucinatory patterns of light and shadow as morning sun filters through the ancient, carefully tended pines—makes us start to speak in whispers and then stop speaking altogether until the only sounds are the bird cries and the swishing of the old-fashioned brooms a pair of gardeners are using to clear fallen pink petals from the gravel paths.

Gesshoji dates from the late 17th century, when an older structure—a ruined Zen temple—was turned into a resting place for the Matsudaira aristocracy, which would rule this part of Japan for more than 200 years. Successive generations of aristocrats added on to the complex, eventually producing a maze of raised mounds and rectangular open

Each of the grave areas at the 17th-century Gesshoji temple is reached through a carved gate decorated with animal and plant totems of the lords buried within.

spaces, like adjacent courtyards. Each grave area is reached through an exquisitely carved gate, decorated with the images—dragons, hawks, calabashes, grapefruits and flowers—that served as the totems of the lord whose tomb it guards. Ranging from simple wooden structures to elaborate stone monuments, the gates provide a kind of capsule history of how Japanese architecture evolved over the course of centuries.

Though the crows at the Buddhist Gesshoji temple (above: covered grave) are the loudest the author has ever heard, something about its gardens, famous for their 30,000 blue hydrangeas, causes visitors to whisper.

On the April morning when my husband, Howie, and I visit Gesshoji, the cherry blossoms are just beginning to drop from the trees. The pointed foliage in the iris bed promises an early bloom, and the temple is celebrated for the 30,000 blue hydrangeas that will flower later in the season. It is also famous for the immense statue of a ferocious-looking tortoise, its reptilian head raised and telegraphing a fierce, rather untortoiselike alertness, positioned in front of the tomb of the sixth Matsudaira lord. According to one superstition, rubbing the turtle's head guarantees longevity, while another claims that, long ago, the beast lumbered off its stone slab each night, crawled through the gardens to drink water from the pond and wandered through the city. The tall stone pillar that rises from the middle of its back was put there, it is said, to discourage the turtle's nightly strolls.

Leaving the temple, I see a sign, noting that the writer Lafcadio Hearn was especially fond of the temple and that he wrote about the tortoise. The quote from Hearn, which the sign reproduces in part, begins with a description of certain sacred statues reputed to have a clandestine nocturnal life: "But the most unpleasant customer of all this uncanny fraternity to have encountered after dark was certainly the monster tortoise of Gesshoji temple in Matsue. . . . This stone colossus is almost seventeen feet in length and lifts its head six feet from the ground. . . . Fancy . . . this mortuary incubus staggering abroad at midnight, and its hideous attempts to swim in the neighbouring lotus-pond!"

Sometime in the early 1970s I saw a film that so haunted me that for years I wondered if I might have dreamed it. It didn't help that I could never find anyone else who had seen it. The film was called *Kwaidan*, and, as I later learned, was directed by Masaki Kobayashi, based on four Japanese ghost stories by Hearn. My favorite segment, "Ho-ichi the Earless," concerned a blind musician who could recite the ballad of a historic naval battle so eloquently that the spirits of the clan members killed in the fighting brought him to the cemetery to retell their tragic fate.

Subsequently, I grew fascinated by the touching figure of the oddly named writer whose tales had provided the film's inspiration. The son of a Greek mother and an Irish father, born in Greece in 1850, Hearn grew up in Ireland. As a young man, he emigrated to Ohio, where he became a reporter for the *Cincinnati Enquirer*—until he was fired for marrying a black woman. The couple ended the marriage, which had never been recognized, and he spent ten years reporting from New Orleans, then two more in Martinique. In 1890, he moved to Japan, about which he intended to write a book and where he found work as a teacher at a secondary school in Matsue.

Tiny in stature, nearly blind and always conscious of being an outsider, Hearn discovered in Japan his first expe-

ALL PHOTOS BY HANS SAUTTER / AURORA SELECT

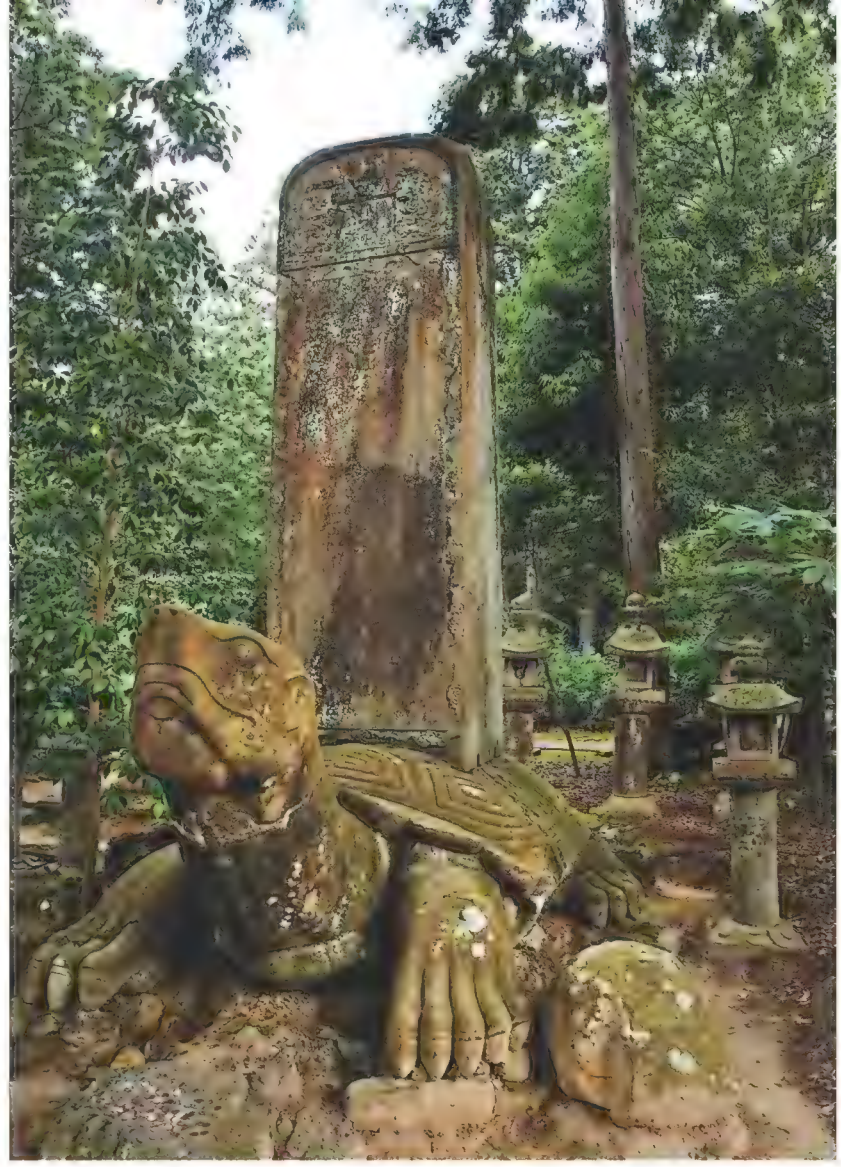
rience of community and belonging. He married a Japanese woman, assumed financial responsibility for her extended family, became a citizen, had four children and was adopted into another culture, about which he continued to write until his death in 1904. Though Hearn took a Japanese name, Yakumo Koizumi, he saw himself as a foreigner perpetually trying to fathom an unfamiliar society—an effort that meant paying attention to what was traditional (a subject that fed his fascination with the supernatural) and what was rapidly changing. Though his work has been criticized for exoticizing and romanticizing his adopted country, he remains beloved by the Japanese.

I had always wanted to visit the town where Hearn lived for 15 months before career and family obligations led him to move elsewhere in Japan, and it seemed to me that any impression I might take away about the traditional versus the modern, a subject of as much relevance today as it was in Hearn's era, might begin in the place where Hearn observed and recorded the way of life and the legends that were vanishing even as he described them.

In the weeks before my departure, friends who have made dozens of trips to Japan confess that they had never been to the San-in coast, which borders the Sea of Japan, across from Korea. The relative scarcity of Western visitors may have something to do with the notion that Matsue is difficult or expensive to reach, a perception that is not entirely untrue. You can (as we did) take an hour-and-a-half flight from Tokyo to Izumo, or alternately, a six-hour train journey from the capital. When I tell a Japanese acquaintance that I am going to Matsue, he laughs and says, "But no one goes there!"

In fact, he couldn't be more wrong. While the area is mostly unexplored by Americans and Europeans, it's very popular with the Japanese, many of whom arrange to spend summer vacations in this region known for the relatively unspoiled, rugged beauty of its shoreline and the relaxed pace and cultural riches of its towns. It offers a chance to reconnect with an older, more rural and traditional Japan, vestiges of which still remain, in stark contrast to the shockingly overdeveloped and heavily industrialized San-yo coast, on the opposite side of the island. The Shinkansen bullet train doesn't reach here, and a slower private railroad line wends its way up a coast that features dramatic rock formations, white beaches and (at least on the days we visited) a calm turquoise sea. During the tourist season, it's even possible to travel through part of the area on a steam locomotive.

Shimane Prefecture, at the heart of the San-in region, is the site of several celebrated religious shrines. The most important of these is Izumo-taisha, a few miles from Izumo. One of the oldest (its date of origin is unclear, though it is known to have existed in the eighth century), largest and most venerated pilgrimage destinations in the country, Izumo-taisha is where, it is believed, eight million spirit gods congregate for their official annual conference, migrating from all over Japan every October; everywhere except Izumo, October is known as the month without gods, since they are all presumably in



Japan's west coast (left: map) is known for its quiet towns and a tortoiselike pace. Rubbing the head of Gesshoji's giant turtle (above) is said to ensure longevity. The stele was put on its back, some say, to discourage its perambulations.

Izumo, where October is called the month with gods.

Izumo-taisha is dedicated to Okuninushi, a descendant of the god and goddess who created Japan, and the deity in charge of fishing, silkworm culture and perhaps most important, happy marriages. Most likely, that explains why on a balmy Sunday afternoon the shrine—which consists of several structures surrounded by an extensive park—is crowded with multi-generational families and with a steady stream of ever-so-slightly anxious-looking couples who have come to admire the cherry blossoms and ask the gods to bless their unions.

As at every Shinto shrine, the faithful begin by symbolically purifying themselves, washing their hands and rinsing their mouths with water poured from delicate dippers hung above a trough. Then, approaching the main hall, they clap their hands to attract the attention of the gods, and bow to express respect. Some clap twice, others four times because four was the sacred number in ancient Japan; it was thought that both gods and people had four types of souls. It takes a certain amount of concentration for these newlyweds-to-be to focus on their heartfelt prayers while, all around them, people—children especially—are excitedly flinging coins into the air, trying to lodge them (doing so successfully is said

MAP: GUILBERT GATES

to bring good fortune) in the huge, elaborately coiled straw ropes that guard the entrance to the central buildings. These ropes, thought to prevent unwelcome visitations from evil spirits, are characteristic of Shinto shrines, but the colossal ones at Izumo-taisha are unusually imposing.

In Izumo, a helpful young woman who tells us where to stow our luggage provides our first introduction to the patient sweetness with which the Japanese try to aid foreigners, even if it means locating the one person in the building—or the town—who speaks a little English, all of which makes traveling in this comparatively out-of-the way region easier and more fun than (as I had worried) daunting. From Izumo City, it's less than a half-hour by train, past farmhouses and kitchen gardens, to Matsue. The so-called "City of Water," bordered by the Tenjin River and by Lake Shinji, which is famous for its spectacular sunsets, Matsue also has an extensive system of moats surrounding its 17th-century castle. On clear days, a sparkly aquatic light blends the pinkish aura of Venice with the oceanic dazzle of the Northern California coast.

A 15-minute taxi ride from downtown Matsue is Tamatsukuri Onsen, the hot spring resort where we are staying and where the gods are said to enjoy an immersion in the healing waters. Running through this bucolic suburb is the Tamayu River, edged on both sides by blossoming cherries that shade groups of family and friends picnicking on the peacock-blue plastic tarps that are de rigueur for this 21st-century version of the ancient custom of cherry-blossom viewing.

The most familial, genially celebratory version of this time-honored custom is transpiring on the grounds of Matsue Castle on the late Sunday afternoon we visit. Lines of brightly colored stands sell toys, trinkets, masks, grilled squid and fried balls of dough stuffed with octopus. The

A traditional gateway, or *torii* (above), marks the threshold to the Shinto shrine Izumo-taisha, where all eight million spirit gods are believed to convene in October. Pilgrims write prayers on wooden plaques (left), posted for the spirits to read.

most popular stalls offer still-warm egg cookies (shaped a bit like madeleines) and freshly baked bean-paste dumplings, playing to the (somewhat mystifying, to me) Japanese passion for what one might call extreme sweets. Meanwhile, on a shaded platform, a flute and *shamisen* orchestra produces the rippling phrases of classical Japanese music.

Matsue Castle rises like a stone wedding cake, its monumental walls supporting a series of terraced gardens. On its northern slope is a wooded park meticulously groomed to create the impression of untouched wildness. At the top of the hill is the castle itself, an ornate, harmonious, stately structure rising five stories and built in a fashion known as the "plover" style for its roofs, which rising to steep peaks and curving outward and upward, suggest the spread wings of a shorebird.

The castle is one of those places that make me wish I knew more (or to be truthful, anything at all) about carpentry, so that I could properly appreciate the craftsmanship that enabled the structure to be built without nails, assembled by artful joinery in what must be the supreme incarnation of tongue-and-groove construction. I can only admire the burnished richness of the wooden siding; the art objects, samurai helmets, antique kimonos; the historical murals and architectural models in the castle

Izumo-taisha, which dates to the eighth century, is the most important shrine in Shimane Prefecture. It is dedicated to the god of happy marriages, which explains the many anxious couples who visit. The rope identifies a sacred place.

museum; and the vertiginous view of the distant mountains from the open platform on the highest floor.

Our capable companion, Chieko Kawasaki—many of the smaller Japanese cities and towns provide volunteer English-speaking guides through the municipal tourist bureaus, if you contact them in advance—explains the many superstitions associated with the castle. According to one, construction was plagued by problems until workers discovered a skull pierced by a spear; only after the skull was given a proper ceremonial burial did the building proceed smoothly. And as we stand on the top level, looking out over Lake Shinji, Chieko tells us that the island in the middle of the lake—Bride Island—is believed to have sprung up when a young wife, mistreated by her mother-in-law, decided to return to her family via a shortcut over the frozen lake. When the ice melted unexpectedly and she fell through and drowned, a goddess took pity on her and turned her into an island.

As Chieko speaks, I find myself thinking again of Lafcadio Hearn, and of the delight he took in hearing—and recording—such stories. In his essay "The Chief City of the Province of the Gods," Hearn repeats the tale, which he calls "The Island of the Young Wife." His summary is an abbreviated version of what Chieko has just told us. Perhaps the myth has continued to evolve and grow over the intervening decades, and perhaps it is as alive today as it was in Hearn's time, and in the centuries before that.

FRANCINE PROSE*'s 20th book,* Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife*, will be published this month. Photographer* **HANS SAUTTER** *has lived and worked in Tokyo for 30 years.*

Hearn's former house and the museum next door, at the base of the castle hill, are located in an old samurai neighborhood. At the Hearn Museum, as at Izumo-taisha, we again find ourselves among pilgrims. Only this time they are fellow pilgrims. A steady parade of Japanese visitors files reverently past vitrines containing a range of memorabilia, from the suitcase Hearn carried with him to Japan to handsome copies of first editions of his books, photographs of his family, his pipes and the conch shell with which he allegedly called his servants to relight his pipe, letters in his idiosyncratic handwriting and tiny cages in which he kept pet birds and insects. What seems to inspire particular interest and tenderness among his fans is the high desk that Hearn had specially made to facilitate reading and writing because he was so short and his vision so poor (one eye had been lost in a childhood accident). Beginning writers everywhere might take a lesson from Hearn's working method: when he thought he was finished with a piece, he put it in his desk drawer for a time, then took it out to revise it, then returned it to the drawer, a process that continued until he had exactly what he wanted.

Hearn's image is everywhere in Matsue; his sweet, somewhat timid and melancholy mustachioed face adorns lampposts through the city, and in souvenir shops you can even purchase a brand of tea with his portrait on the package. It is generally assumed that Hearn's place in the heart of the Japanese derives from the fervor with which he adopted their culture and attempted to make it more comprehensible to the West. But in his fascinating 2003 book about the relationship between 19th-

century New England and Japan, *The Great Wave*, literary critic and historian Christopher Benfey argues that Hearn, who despised the bad behavior of foreign travelers and deplored the avidity with which the Japanese sought to follow Western models, "almost alone among Western commentators . . . gave eloquent voice to . . . Japanese anger—and specifically anger against Western visitors and residents in Japan."

"Hearn," notes Benfey, "viewed Japan through an idealized haze of ghostly 'survivals' from antiquity." Fittingly, his former residence could hardly seem more traditionally Japanese. Covered in tatami mats and separated by sliding shoji screens, the simple, elegant rooms are characteristic of the multipurpose, practical adaptability of Japanese homes, in which sitting rooms are easily converted to bedrooms and vice versa. Sliding back the outer screens provides a view of the gardens, artful arrangements of rocks, a pond, a magnolia and a crape myrtle, all of which Hearn described in one of his best-known essays, "In a Japanese Garden." The noise of the frogs is so perfectly regular, so soothing, so—dare I say it?—Zenlike that for a moment I find myself imagining (wrongly) that it might be recorded.

Bride Island on Lake Shinji (above) recalls the legend of a girl who fell through the ice and drowned. A kind goddess turned her into an island. Foxes, thought to carry messages from such deities, are honored near Matsue Castle (below), which has stood watch over its namesake city since 1611.

View a slide show of the San-in coast at Smithsonian.com/japan

In his study, Hearn worked on articles and stories that got steadily less flowery (a failing that dogged his early, journalistic prose) and more evocative and precise. In "The Chief City of the Province of the Gods," Hearn wrote that the earliest morning noise one hears in Matsue is the "pounding of the ponderous pestle of the *kometsuki*, the cleaner of rice—a sort of colossal wooden mallet. . . . Then the boom of the great bell of Zokoji, the Zenshu temples," then "the melancholy echoes of drumming . . . signaling the Buddhist hour of morning prayer."

These days, Matsue residents are more likely to be awakened by the noise of traffic streaming along expressways bordering the lake. But even given the realities of contemporary Japan, it is surprisingly easy to find a place or catch a glimpse of something that—in spirit, if not in precise detail—strikes you as being essentially unchanged since Hearn spent his happiest days here.

One such site is the Jozan Inari Shrine, which Hearn liked to pass through on his way to the school at which he taught. Located not far from the Hearn Museum, in the park at the base of Matsue Castle, the shrine—half-hidden

amid the greenery and a bit difficult to find—contains thousands of representations of foxes, the messengers of the god (or goddess, depending on how the deity is represented) Inari, who determines the bounty of the rice harvest and, by extension, prosperity. Passing through a gate and along an avenue of sphinxlike foxes carved in stone, you reach the heart of the shrine, in a wooded glade crowded with more stone foxes, pitted by weather, covered with moss, crumbling with age—and accompanied by row after row of newer, bright, jaunty-looking white and gold ceramic foxes. Inari shrines, which have become increasingly popular in Japan, are thought by some to be haunted and best avoided after dark. When we reach the one in Matsue, the sun is just beginning to set, which may be part of the reason we are all alone there. With its simultaneously orderly and haphazard profusion of foxes, the place suggests those obsessional, outsider-art masterpieces created by folk artists driven to cover their homes and yards with polka dots or bottles or buttons—the difference being that the Inari Shrine was generated by a community, over generations, fox by fox.

It's at points like this that I feel at risk of having fallen into the trap into which, it is often claimed, Hearn tumbled headlong—that is, the pitfall of romanticizing Old Japan, the lost Japan, and ignoring the sobering realities of contemporary life in this overcrowded country that saw a decade of economic collapse and stagnation during the 1990s and is now facing, along with the rest of us, yet another financial crisis.

Our spirits lift again when we reach Hagi. Though the population of this thriving port city on the Sea of Japan, up to five hours by train down the coast from Matsue, is aging, the city seems determined to preserve its history and at the same time to remain vital and forward-looking, to cherish what Hearn would have called the "savings" of an older Japan and to use what remains of the past to make life more pleasurable for the living. So the ruins of Hagi Castle—built in 1604 and abandoned in the late 19th century—have been landscaped and developed into an attractive park enjoyed by local residents.

A misfit in America, the writer Lafcadio Hearn (left) wandered for years until he arrived in Matsue in 1890. He married a Japanese woman, became a citizen and began writing tales about his adopted country. A replica of his desk (above), raised to bring it closer to his one good eye, is admired by pilgrims who still flock to the place he finally felt at home.

Long established as a center for pottery, Hagi has nurtured its craftsmen, and is now known for the high quality of the ceramics produced here and available for sale in scores of studios, galleries and shops. Hagi boasts yet another lovingly restored samurai district, but here the older houses are surrounded by homes in which people are still living and tending the lush gardens that can be glimpsed over the whitewashed walls. Sam Yoshi, our guide, brings us to the Kikuya residence, the dwelling of a merchant family dating from the early 17th century. Perhaps the most complex and interesting of the houses we've visited in this part of Japan, the Kikuya residence features a striking collection of domestic objects (from elaborate hair ornaments to an extraordinary pair of screens on which a dragon and tiger are painted) and artifacts em-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 80

BOTTOM: MARY LOUISE VINCENT LAFCADIO HEARN COLLECTION / HIRAM COLLEGE

Saving Punjab

A Sikh architect is helping to preserve cultural sites in the north Indian state still haunted by 1947's heart-wrenching Partition

BY GEOFFREY C. WARD

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAGHU RAI

India's Golden Temple at Amritsar—destroyed and rebuilt over centuries of strife—is to Sikhs what Mecca is to Muslims.

My wife says I suffer from

an "India problem." She's right. I lived in New Delhi as a teenager during the 1950s, came home to college at 18 and managed to stay away from India for a quarter of a century. But over the past 26 years I've been back more than 20 times, sometimes with a legitimate excuse—an assignment from one magazine or another—but mostly because I now can't imagine life without a regular dose of the sights and sounds and smells I first knew as a boy, can't bear not seeing the friends I've made there.

When the editors of SMITHSONIAN asked me to pick a place I'd always wanted to see, it took about ten minutes to settle on Punjab, the north Indian state that was brutally halved between India and Pakistan after they won their independence from Britain in 1947. The Delhi I knew growing up—my father was stationed there, working for the Ford Foundation—had only recently been transformed into a largely Punjabi city by the influx of more than 400,000 Hindu and Sikh refugees, all of them haunted by bitter memories of the violence of Partition that had forced more than ten million people from their homes on both sides of the border and may have cost a million lives. Virtually everyone I knew had memories of Punjab. The tutor who struggled to teach me high-school math had stumbled across much of it on foot. His elderly mother, whose gently spiced samosas I can still taste, somehow made it, too. My two closest boyhood friends were Sikhs whose poultry farm on the outskirts of Old Delhi adjoined a sprawling tent city still crowded with Punjabis awaiting new homes seven years after they'd been forced from their old ones.

I'd always wanted to see something of the world they'd left behind. I'd had glimpses: I hunted in those bad old days, so my friends and I sometimes strayed across Punjab's border in search of game. But I'd never been to Amritsar, the city that is to Sikhs what Mecca is to Muslims, Varanasi is to Hindus, Jerusalem is to Jews and Rome is to Catholics. Nor had I seen the lush countryside around it where some of the most appalling violence of Partition took place and where relics of Punjab's history lie scattered everywhere.

Two people who know the region well agreed to accompany me, the photographer Raghu Rai and his wife, Gurmeet, herself a Sikh and also a conservation architect consumed by a desire to help save all that she can of Punjab's historical heritage. They, too, are haunted by Partition. Raghu was a small boy in 1947, living in the village of Jhang in what is now Pakistan, but he still remembers fleeing with his family out the back of their house as an angry Muslim mob banged on the front door. Gurmeet, too young to have firsthand memories of the division of India, comes from a clan that includes both Sikhs who fled from Pakistan and Muslims who stayed behind.

Already captivated by India at age 14, the author (above: at left) strikes a pose with Hindu holy men near his New Delhi home, circa 1954. The convulsion of Partition displaced millions of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in 1947, when violence swept the Punjabi border (left: map). Religious tensions still seethe in the region, even as the faithful make pilgrimages to Amritsar. A cleanshaven American Sikh (below: stars-and-stripes scarf) and his recent bride pray at the Golden Temple.

When she returned to Delhi from a visit across the border to her family's ancestral village in 2000, she recalled, "It was a homecoming from a place which felt quite like home."

The Grand Trunk Road runs for 1,500 miles from Kolkata on India's eastern coast all the way to Peshawar on Pakistan's western edge. A 170-mile section of the ancient trade route—now designated National Highway Number One—cuts diagonally across the Indian Punjab. "Truly," Rudyard Kipling wrote in *Kim*, "the Grand Trunk Road is a wonderful spectacle. . . . bearing without crowding . . . such a river of life as exists nowhere else in the world." That river flows far faster now and is no longer uncrowded. Kim and his contemporaries moved mostly on foot; the fastest travelers rode in horse carts. Now, big gaudily painted trucks race past one another in both directions, blaring horns and spewing black exhaust. Motorcyclists weave among them, wives and small children clinging on behind. Bicycles and sputtering motor-rickshaws join the flow; so do jeeps that

ALL PHOTOS BY RAGHU RAI / MAGNUM PHOTOS; TOP: PHOTO COURTESY OF GEOFFREY C. WARD; MAP: GUILBERT GATES

act as country taxis and spavined buses so oversold that a dozen or more men ride with the baggage on the roof.

The brilliant green of the countryside through which all this traffic elbows its way is broken only by the trees that set one wheat field apart from the next and by occasional patches of brilliant yellow mustard. Punjab is the heartland of the Green Revolution that turned India from a country that could not feed its people into an exporter of grain.

Gurmeet knows nearly every inch of this highway. As a young architect, she spent a season in 1993 with the U.S. National Park Service, helping to survey historic structures along the C & O Canal between Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. After she returned to India, she persuaded

Mustard and wheat flourish in the rich soil of Punjab state, the breadbasket (below) of a nation once unable to feed itself. With modern fertilizer and improved seeds, India now exports grain. Guru Nanak (right) was the first of the Sikh gurus and founder of the faith. Always outnumbered, even in their Punjabi stronghold, Sikhs have frequently found themselves under attack; they've never failed to fight back. The vexing issue of Sikh autonomy remains unresolved.

a number of funders, including Unesco and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), to let her lead a team that would create a similar inventory of all the unprotected monuments along the Grand Trunk Road in Punjab. Nothing like it had been attempted before.

It's not easy to tell old from new in India. For most historic structures, there are no laws to prevent damaging alterations or outright demolition. Nonetheless, Gurmeet and her team managed to identify and document some 1,100 historically or architecturally significant structures along the Punjabi stretch of the ancient highway. Their list includes everything from the former palaces of feudal rulers to the rock-hewn wells that once served their tenants; from Hindu temples and Sikh *gurdwaras* and Christian churches bustling with believers to the lonely roadside tombs of Muslim saints, left behind by those who fled to Pakistan but still visited weekly by Sikh and Hindu farmers in search of miracles. All but a handful of Gurmeet's discoveries are deteriorating and unprotected. To an outsider, the task of rescuing more than a fraction of them seems almost insurmountable. Gurmeet just smiles. "Let's see," she says.

No city in the Indian Punjab has witnessed more history or is home to more historic sites than Amritsar. Its name combines the Sanskrit words for the sacred nectar of life (*amrita*) and for lake (*sarovar*), a reference to the pool within the precincts of the Golden Temple of the Sikhs that is believed to wash away sins. But at first glance, there's nothing celestial about it. The narrow streets are clamorous, dusty, claustrophobic. Home to more than a million people, Amritsar has long since spilled beyond the walls that once defined its borders, and even in the city's oldest sections, most buildings are drab, run-down and recent.

The Golden Temple, however, is a revelation. Sikh men are identifiable by the turbans and beards their faith requires the orthodox to wear, but their distinctive theology and remarkable history remain little known beyond India's borders. Their most sacred shrine embodies both. We joined a stream of chattering pilgrims and, with covered heads and bare feet, stepped through the main gateway—and into another world. The cacophony of the city fell away. The waters of the broad sacred pool mirrored a brilliant sky. The sun gleamed on the white marble cloister that surrounds the pool and burned so brightly on the temple built on the island in its center that it seemed almost aflame.

The pilgrims around us fell silent. Some shut their eyes and folded their hands. Others fell to their knees and touched their foreheads to the ground. The complex is built at a level lower than the surrounding streets so that poor and high-born worshipers alike are forced to humble themselves by climbing down into it. Gateways on all four sides are meant to welcome people of all castes and creeds. Volunteers cook and serve thousands of free meals for pilgrims each day and insist that those who eat them do so side by side. "There are no foes nor strangers," says Sikh scripture, "for we are all fellow beings."

No one gawks here. No one demands money. Everyone seems content simply to be present in this holiest of places. The pilgrims make their slow, reverent clockwise way around the marble platform that edges the pool, past an old man with a white beard reaching nearly to his waist who gently lifts his infant grandson in and out of the sacred waters; a young mother on her knees patiently teaching her little girl the proper way to prostrate herself; a cleanshaven American Sikh, his head covered with a stars-and-stripes handkerchief, praying alongside his brand-new bride, her wrists hidden by bright red bridal bangles.

The goal of every visitor is to follow the causeway that leads out to the gilded sanctum sanctorum and pay respects to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred book that is the sole object of Sikh veneration and was first installed there in 1604. Nanak, the first of the Sikh gurus (or "great teachers") whose thoughts are contained within its pages, was a 15th-century mystic with a simple message: "There is but One God. He is all that is." In the search for salvation, the only

TOP: YVAN TRAVERT / AKG-IMAGES

thing that matters is meditation on his name. "There is no Hindu," he said, "there is no Mussulman."

Whether or not Nanak ever meant to found a religion, Sikhs believe he did. And this place, where his teachings and those of four of his nine successors were brought together by the fifth guru, has special meaning for them. "It is, quite simply, the core of their . . . being," the Sikh historian Patwant Singh has written. "It represents so many things they are immensely proud of: the vision of their gurus who gave it form and wrote the scriptures on the banks of the sacred waters; the courage of their forebears who died defending it; and the devotion with which others laid their abundant wealth before it in gratitude for the inspiration it has provided . . . over the centuries."

That inspiration has been sorely needed. Always outnumbered, even in their Punjabi stronghold, the Sikhs have frequently found themselves under attack. They've never failed to fight back, against the Moguls who tried to exterminate them in the 17th century, the Afghans who razed the Golden Temple three times between 1748 and 1768 and the British who by 1849 had destroyed the sprawling 19th-century empire carved out by their ablest chieftain, Ranjit Singh. Later, Sikhs served out of all proportion to their numbers in the armed forces of independent India.

But the issue of Sikh autonomy has never fully been resolved. During the 1980s, bitter, sometimes bloody quarrels between the Indian government and elements of the Sikh community led to something like a civil war. In June of 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered a military assault against armed militants holed up within the Golden Temple complex. It killed several hundred Sikhs, many of them innocent pilgrims, and left the sacred structure badly damaged. Just five months later, two of Mrs. Gandhi's own Sikh bodyguards avenged *that* assault by assassinating her as she walked through her garden in New Delhi. Hindu mobs, egged on by politicians belonging to the late prime minister's Congress Party, then avenged that killing by butchering some 3,000 Sikhs in the streets of Delhi. More than a decade of sporadic violence followed before relative peace returned to the Punjabi countryside. But resentments remain: calendars featuring romanticized depictions of Sikhs killed during the conflict are

Hundreds of Sikhs died when Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (far left) ordered troops to storm the Golden Temple complex in 1984. A few months later, in retaliation, she was assassinated. The temple has since been repaired (left).

Architect Gurmeet Rai (exploring the 18th-century fortress Gobindgarh) campaigns to preserve India's vanishing historical treasures. "Our historic buildings need to mean something to the people who live around them," she says.

for sale in every bazaar, and as we drove away from the temple, a cycle rickshaw crossed in front of us with flattering portraits of Mrs. Gandhi's assassins stenciled on its back.

As we negotiated Amritsar traffic, Gurmeet's iPhone rarely stopped ringing. She now heads the Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative (CRCI), a multidisciplinary conservation consultancy with projects all over the country, but it is preserving the relics of Sikh history that means the most to her. We rounded a traffic circle marked by a battered Patton tank captured from Pakistan by a Sikh regiment and pulled up at a little guard post. Two watchmen peered curiously into the car window, recognized Gurmeet and waved us through. We were about to enter Gobindgarh, a 43-acre, 18th-century Sikh fortress with four mountainous bastions and a broad moat choked with trees. Ranjit Singh stored some of his vast treasure within its walls. The British Army occupied it. So did the army of free India, which in 2006 turned it over to the state of Punjab. It is not yet

BOTTOM TWO PHOTOS: BETTMANN / CORBIS; THE INDIA TODAY GROUP / GETTY IMAGES

open to the general public, but in the middle of the old parade ground craftsmen are mixing traditional lime mortar in a circular pit. Under the CRCI's direction they are shoring up the mammoth brick tower in which Ranjit Singh lived when visiting the holy city. Gurmeet has stopped by to make sure the color of the lime is right. But she has bigger plans, as well. There are rumors that an American-based hotelier plans to turn the fort into a luxury hotel for overseas Punjabis interested in revisiting the shrines of their faith without more than minimal contact with the real India. If he succeeds, she fears ordinary citizens will be kept out of this precious relic of their history.

"'Freezing buildings in time may not work here the way it does in the West," Gurmeet says. "There are too many pressures for change. But turning everything into tourist hotels won't work either. Our historic buildings need to mean something to the people who live around them. We need to involve them in our work, to make them understand its importance." To achieve those ends she hopes to undertake an overall management plan that would both provide for world-class preservation and supply visitors with the interpretive materials they need to understand monuments like this. (Since our visit, Gurmeet has been given the go-ahead by the Punjab government.)

That understanding has largely been missing in Punjab. In recent years, for example, Sikh congregations have been "improving" historic structures by bulldozing them and then constructing ever-more-lavish substitutes on the sites. "Somewhere along the line the original, unpretentious Sikh architecture has begun to be perceived as something to be ashamed of," Gurmeet says. "Our gurus were simple, down-to-earth men of the soil, and their buildings reflect the simplicity and harmony Sikhism is all about."

Wagah marks the western end of the Indian portion of the Grand Trunk Road. It is the sole crossing point between the two Punjabs; Lahore, the capital of Ranjit Singh's Sikh kingdom and of pre-Partition united Punjab, is just 18 miles up the road. The formal flag-lowering ceremony that takes place at Wagah at dusk every evening of the year must be one of the oddest regularly scheduled events on earth. On the evening we visited, hundreds of eager onlookers streamed into specially built grandstands in the coppery light. On the Indian side, a big amiable crowd jostled one another for the best seats, men, women and children sitting together. In the roadbed, several busloads of teenage girls in brightly colored *salwar kameez* danced to recorded *bhangra* music. On the Pakistani side, a giant portrait of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founding father whom Pakistanis call their *Quaid-i-Azam,* or "Great Leader," looked down upon stadium seats in which men and women sat carefully segregated: men and boys on the left side of the road; girls and women (a handful in full-length *burqas*) on the right. Instead of dancing schoolgirls, three gray-bearded mullahs in green and white raced back and forth, waving huge Pakistani flags to whip up enthusiasm.

The ceremony itself proved both impressive and ludicrous. As the spectators cheered and chanted "Long Live India" or "Long Live Pakistan," squads of uniformed Punjabis from both sides of the border, picked for their height and fierce good looks and wearing turbans with starched coxcombs that made them look still taller, quick-marched toward one another till they stood only a foot or two apart. Then, they stamped and whirled, puffed out their chests and flared their nostrils in perfect military unison, each apparently seeking to out-testosterone his opposite number

At Wagah, the sole crossing point between the two Punjabs, sharply dressed Indian and Pakistani soldiers turn out—to the cheers of rival spectators—for a daily flag-lowering ceremony (right) that the author calls both "impressive and ludicrous."

before hauling down their flags. I asked the major in charge of the Indian contingent how seriously his men took their nightly confrontation with their neighbors. He laughed. "We've been doing this for more than 20 years," he said. "We know each other's names. It's all for the audience."

It was the muted reaction of that audience that fascinated me. The region around Wagah had witnessed some of the worst Partition bloodletting. Since then, India and Pakistan have gone to war three times. A few weeks before my visit, fanatics trained in Pakistan had butchered more than 160 people in Mumbai. The people who had turned out to watch the ceremony this evening had grown hoarse shouting patriotic slogans. And yet when the flags were finally folded away and the big gates clanged shut, spectators on both sides drifted as close to the dividing line as the respective armies would allow, peering silently across the no man's land into the faces of counterparts who looked so much like themselves.

Most of the monuments we'd seen testified to Punjab's bloody past: battlefield markers; crumbling village walls built to bar marauders; gurdwaras that honor Sikhs martyred in battle against the Moguls; and Jallianwalla Bagh, the Amritsar park now filled with flowers and shouting schoolchildren, where, in 1919, a British commander ordered his men to fire upon unarmed civilians—killing at least 379 and galvanizing the independence movement.

But there are also sites that still evoke the mutual respect that characterized life for many Punjabis before the tragedy of Partition. Gurmeet led us to one of the most unlikely of them, the Guru ki Maseet, or "Guru's Mosque," in the old walled town of Sri Hargobindpur, west of Amritsar. Here, on a bluff overlooking the Beas River, a member of the Nihang Sikh order, justly celebrated for the ferocity with which it defended the faith against its enemies in the old days, stands lonely guard over a Muslim house of worship. His name is Baba Balwant Singh and he has been on duty here for more than a quarter of a century. The shrine he protects is a modest three-domed brick structure, barely 20 feet deep, with arched entryways so low that anyone much over five feet tall must duck to enter. But it has a truly extraordinary history.

Sri Hargobindpur is named for Hargobind, the sixth Sikh guru, who, according to tradition, ordered his followers to make a city of "unmatched beauty" so that "those who inhabit the town [should] be free of sorrow." Those who inhabited it included Hindus and Muslims as well as Sikhs, and so, to ensure tranquillity, the guru made sure that adherents of all three faiths had their own houses of worship. But sorrow eventually came to Sri Hargobindpur in any case: Partition forced every single resident of its Muslim quarter to flee to Pakistan. Hindu and Sikh refugees took over the homes they left behind. Elsewhere, abandoned mosques were transformed into shelters for people or livestock—or demolished altogether.

But this mosque's unique origin made such actions unthinkable. "Nobody can damage this *maseet*," the leader of the Tarna Dal band of Nihangs declared. "This *maseet* was established by our guru. If anyone tries to damage it, we will kill him." His followers reverently placed a copy of the *Granth Sahib* inside the building and set up a 50-foot flagpole bound in blue cloth and topped with a double-edged sword; it let the world know the mosque would henceforth be under their protection.

The man who still guards it, Baba Balwant Singh, is a formidable figure in the lofty dark blue turban and blue robes of his order but is reluctant to talk about himself. If he does, he says, his ego might get in the way of his relationship with God. He dragged two string beds into the sunshine for his guests to sit upon.

Gurmeet explained she had come upon him and his mosque

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For 25 years Baba Balwant Singh (opposite), a Sikh, has watched over the small Muslim mosque at Sri Hargobindpur (above: the author approaches it). Singh says talking about himself might get in the way of his relationship with God.

almost by accident in 1997. She had happened to climb onto the roof of a nearby gurdwara to get an overview of the town when she spotted a trio of little domes. The mosque was in bad shape. The little compound that surrounded it was overgrown.

Gurmeet saw a rare opportunity to work with the local community to restore a place venerated by two often-warring faiths. With funds and volunteers from a United Nations-sponsored project called Culture of Peace, and additional funds from the U.S.-based Sikh Foundation, she and her colleagues set to work. They trained local laborers to make repairs, visited schools to make children understand what was happening to their town, invited townspeople to see the work for themselves. But no Muslims were involved—there were still none in Sri Hargobindpur—and activists began to charge that yet another Muslim shrine was being usurped by unbelievers. It looked as though religious politics might destroy even this community-based project.

As Gurmeet talked, crows bickered on the compound wall. Children called from neighboring roofs. A buffalo bawled. Baba Balwant began preparing for us a special drink made only by the members of his order. Using a big stone mortar and wielding a three-foot-long pestle hacked from a tree, he smashed almonds, cardamon seeds, peppercorns and other ingredients into a paste. He deliberately left one element out of the recipe: the narcotic *bhang* that Nihangs reserve only for themselves. He folded the paste into a bright orange cloth and began dunking it into a steel bowl filled with a mixture of well water and milk from the noisy buffalo, then wringing it out.

It took months of negotiating, Gurmeet continued, to reach an agreement between the Nihangs and the religious endowment that holds legal title to all Muslim property abandoned in 1947. Under its provisions, the Nihangs would continue to protect the building as their guru would have wished, but the structure would also remain a mosque—as the guru had also intended. After the signing, a band of blue-clad Nihangs sat respectfully by as the chief imam of the Jama Masjid mosque in Amritsar led a delegation of Muslim dignitaries through their evening prayers. After 55 years the Guru ki Maseet was once again a house of Muslim worship.

Baba Balwant gave his bag of spices one final squeeze, then poured the liquid into big steel tumblers and handed them out to his guests. It was white and almond-flavored, cold and delicious. We said so. "It *is* good," he said with a pleased grin, "but if I had put in the secret ingredient, *then* you could touch the sky!"

I asked Gurmeet how she could have spent so much time and effort working to preserve such a modest building in such a remote location when so many apparently more important structures needed to be preserved.

"It's not the building," she says. "It's the *idea* of the building, a shared sacred space."

Before leaving Punjab, Gurmeet took us back to the Pakistan border once more, just outside the village of Dera Baba Nanak, where, between two guard towers, a Sikh regiment of the Indian Border Security Force has constructed a brick platform from which the faithful can look across the border into Pakistan and see, shimmering on the horizon, the white domes of one of the most sacred of all Sikh gurdwaras, Sri Kartarpur Sahib. It marks the spot where Guru Nanak spent 15 years preaching to his first disciples, and where he died in 1539. As he lay dying, according to one tradition, Muslim and Hindu followers began to quarrel over what was to be done with his body. Muslims believed it must be buried. Hindus were equally sure it had to be cremated. Nanak told each faction to place flowers at his side and leave him for the night. If the Hindus' flowers were freshest in the morning, he said, his body should be burned; if the Muslims' flowers were brightest he would be buried. Then, he covered himself with a sheet. In the morning, both offerings were as fresh as when they'd first been cut. But when the sheet was removed Nanak's body had vanished. His followers cut the makeshift shroud in half. One piece was buried and the spot marked with a tomb; the other was burned and the site of the cremation indicated by a stone cenotaph.

As we started back down the flight of steps, a Sikh family was just starting up them, a young couple and their little boy, all three eager for even a distant glimpse of the place where their faith was founded and where its greatest teacher tried to demonstrate that in the struggle for salvation all Punjabis—and, by extension, all mankind—are one.

Captain Bligh's Cursed Breadfruit

The biographer of William Bligh—he of the infamous mutiny on the *Bounty*—tracks him to Jamaica, and the completion of his star-crossed mission

BY CAROLINE ALEXANDER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE BUTLER

An hour out of the maelstrom of Kingston's traffic, the first frigate bird appeared, and then, around a bend in the road, the sea. There are few beaches on this southeastern side of Jamaica, nothing resembling the white sands and resorts on the opposite shore, around Montego Bay. While Jamaicans might come to the village of Bath, where I was now headed, this part of the island is little visited by outsiders.

Six miles inland I and my guide Andreas Oberli—a Swiss-born botanist and horticulturist who has lived in Jamaica for nearly 30 years—arrived at Bath, seemingly deserted at this late morning hour. A pretty village of sagging, historic houses, it had formerly been a fashionable spa known for its hot springs; the 17th-century privateer Henry Morgan is reputed to have enjoyed the genteel practice of taking the waters. There are two reasons a visitor might come to Bath today: the springs and its botanical garden, which now, beyond its Victorian-looking iron gate, lay snoozing in the sun.

Unfolding lazily from the shade of the garden wall, a straggle of young men with ganja-glazed eyes leaned forward to scrutinize us as we approached. Inside the gate and beyond the sentinel of royal palms, few flowers bloomed, for this garden is given less to blossoms than to trees.

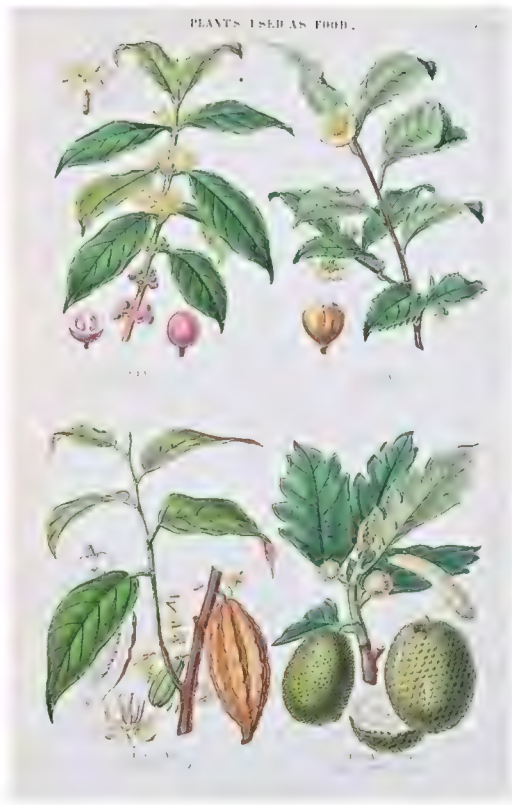
Elephant apple from India; Christmas palm from the Philippines; Ylang ylang from Indonesia; two aged tropical dragon's blood trees and a *Barringtonia asiatica*, believed to be 230 years old. The stark botanical labels hinted at the labor and eccentric vision that lay behind the garden. Established in 1779, Bath is one of the oldest botanical gardens in the world, its collection jump-started, in this time of English-French hostilities, by the capture of a French ship coming from Mauritius laden with Indian mangoes, cinnamon and other exotics that included the euphonious bilimbi, brindonne and carambola, as well as jackfruit and June plum. Eighteenth-century botanizing had become a global enterprise, undertaken by colonial powers such as France, Spain and the Netherlands as well as Britain, to establish encyclopedic plant collections for study and sometimes useful propagation. While most specimens gathered by British collectors were destined for the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, outside London, some went to satellite stations at Calcutta, Sydney, St. Vincent and to Bath.

And it was in homage to the second, transforming consignment of plants brought to Bath that I now paid my visit, for Bath Gardens played a small but poignant part in one of the great sea sagas of all time—the mutiny on the *Bounty*. As the world well knows, in the year 1789, Lt. William Bligh lost his ship *Bounty* at the hands of one Fletcher Christian and a handful of miscreants on a voyage back to England from Tahiti, where the *Bounty* had been sent to collect breadfruit and other useful plants of the South Pacific. The breadfruit expedition, backed by the great and influential botanist Sir Joseph Banks, patron of Kew Gardens and president of the Royal Society, had been commissioned to transport the nutritious, fast-growing fruit to the West Indies for propagation as a cheap food for slave laborers who worked the vast sugar estates. The mutiny, therefore, not only deprived Bligh of his ship, but defused a grand botanical enterprise. Dumped into a lifeboat with 18 members of his crew, and

The botanic wealth of the British Empire found foothold in Jamaica, where Captain Bligh imported Tahitian breadfruit (above) and other useful plants. Cabbage palms and cocoa trees still thrive in Bath Gardens, celebrated in a 19th-century painting by Marianne North (opposite).

RAINER HACKENBERG / CORBIS

MARIANNE NORTH COLLECTION / ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS, KEW



Transplanted from his native Switzerland, botanist Andreas Oberli (above) took root in the soil of Jamaica, like the imported ackee fruit (below), named *Blighia sapida* to honor the British captain. Other travelers brought coffee, tea and cocoa plants (above right: 1872 engraving). Today Oberli roams his adoptive country, campaigning to preserve the island's biodiversity.

with food sufficient for a week, Bligh navigated through high seas and perilous storms over a period of 48 starving days, drawing on his memory of the few charts he had seen of the mostly uncharted waters. His completion of the 3,618-mile voyage to safety in Timor is still regarded as perhaps the most outstanding feat of seamanship and navigation ever conducted in a small boat. As a token of its esteem and trust, the British Admiralty had promoted the young Lieutenant Bligh to captain—and packed him off on another two-year mission, back to Tahiti for the infernal breadfruit. Two thousand one hundred twenty-six breadfruit plants were carried from Tahiti, in pots and tubs stored both on deck and in the below-deck nursery. The expedition's gardener described depredations inflicted by "exceedingly troublesome" flies, cold, "unwholesomeness of Sea Air," salt spray and rationed water; nonetheless, 678 survived to the West Indies, being delivered first to St. Vincent and finally to Jamaica. And it was in February 1793 that Capt. William Bligh, fulfilling at last his momentous commission, had overseen his first deposition of 66 breadfruit specimens from Tahiti, all "in the finest order," in Bath Botanical Gardens.

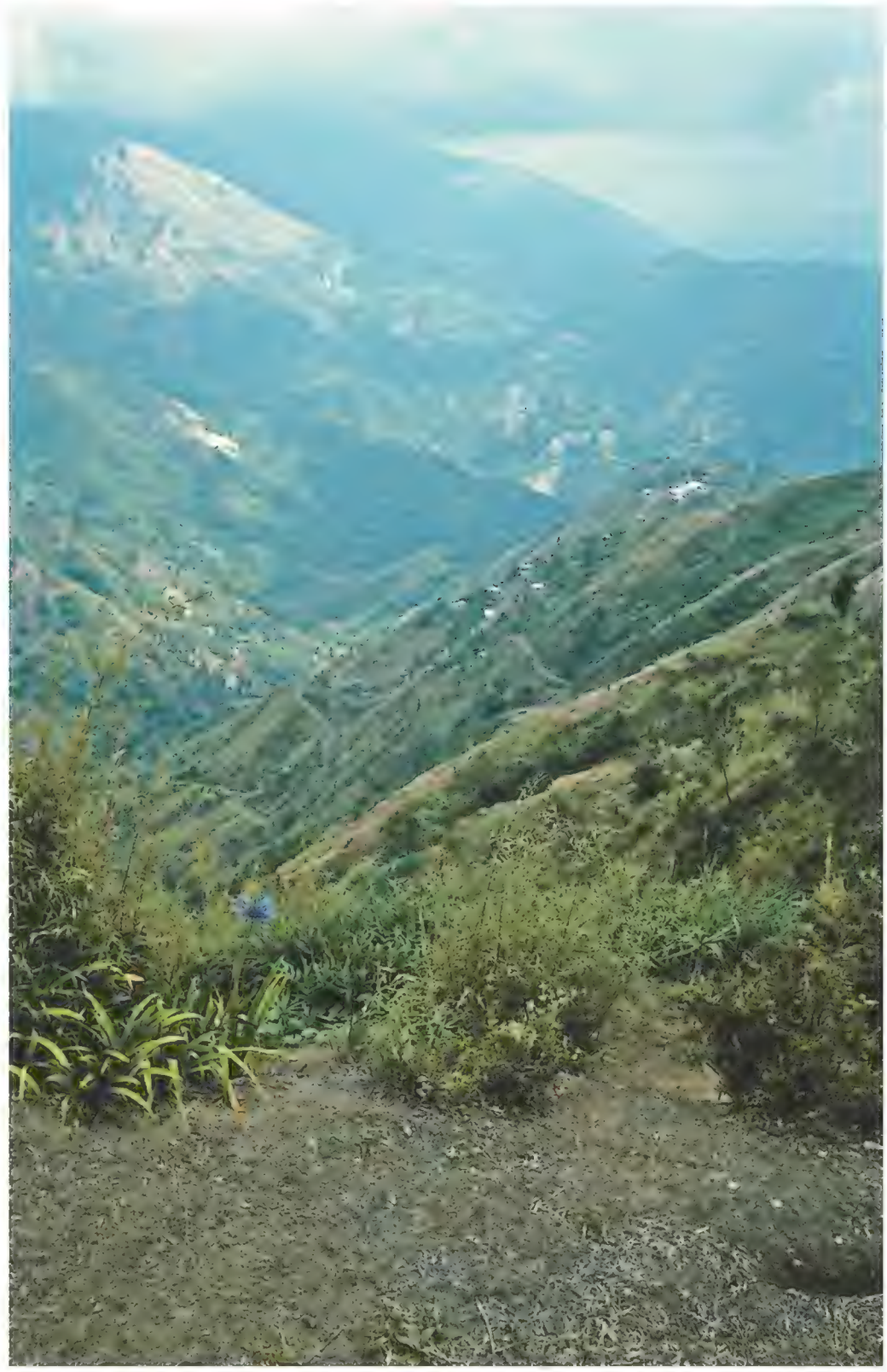
"The Botanic Garden had no rare things in it, except the Sago Plant, the Camphor and Cinnamon," Bligh noted in his log with palpable satisfaction; Bath's meager holdings would only enhance the value of his own, which included more than 30 species in addition to the breadfruit—the carambee, which Malays used for perfume, and the mattee and ettow, which "Produce the fine red dye of Otaheite."

Bligh's ship *Providence* had arrived at Port Royal, Kingston, to some fanfare, its "floating forest," according to an officer of the ship, "eagerly visited by numbers of every rank and degree"— so much so that, as another officer complained, "the common Civility of going around the Ship with them and explaining the Plants became by its frequency rather troublesome." Leaving Kingston, Bligh had sailed for Port Morant, Bath's harbor. Here, the day after his arrival, with moderate temperatures in the 70s and a fine breeze blowing, the *Providence* had been emptied of its last 346 plants, which were carried six miles overland on the heads of bearers and deposited in a shady plot in these gardens.

Today, a cluster of breadfruit trees still flourishes, demure on the edge of dark shade by the western wall. As most breadfruit reproduce not by seed but by sending out long suckers, the modern specimens are affectionately presumed to be "daughter" trees of Bligh's transports. Andreas Oberli, who has aggressively agitated for the restoration of the island's historic gardens, regarded them critically. "You see, this one is from Timor—it has a totally different leaf than the others." The glory of the "classic" Tahitian breadfruit is its large, ornamentally lobed, glossy green foliage. "They should get the labels right," he said curtly, Bligh-like in his keen attention to botanical duty.

Under the towering shade of the oldest trees, a young couple strolled reading the labels of each. Two little boys stood looking intently into a Chinese soapberry, incriminating slingshots in their hands. "Not while I'm here, OK?" Andreas growled, and the boys shrugged and wandered off. Three enormous women entered the garden and, spreading

ABOVE RIGHT: ARCHIVES CHARMET / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY INTERNATIONAL; BOTTOM: NATURAL VISIONS / ALAMY



Mutineers turned then-Lieutenant Bligh (above and top) out of the HMS *Bounty*, interrupting his breadfruit mission in 1789. Bligh later brought plants to Jamaica, where they thrive in the foothills of the Blue Mountains (right).

blankets on the grass, arrayed themselves massively along the earth. Andreas and I picnicked under the shade of a cannonball tree, the high rustling of the garden's glinting fronds and foliage masking most other sounds. Birds, buffeted but triumphant, rode the wind. On the ground, unmolested and untroubled, a rooster strode among the shadows in conscious magnificence, his comb, backlit by the lowering sun, glowing red. "A survey was taken at Kew some years ago," said Andreas; "only 16 percent of the people who visited were there to see the plants." We looked around. "They came for the garden."

My interest in the botanical gardens of Jamaica arose mainly from their little-known role in the saga of Bligh and the mutiny on the *Bounty*, which I had researched for a book. There was also a personal incentive. I had briefly lived in Jamaica as a child, and one of my earliest true memories is of the parklike Hope Royal Botanical Gardens, in Kingston. In my memory, I see a tunnel of climbing vines with trumpety orange flowers; there had been a bandstand and beds of flowers you could touch. But I had not traveled inland, nor had I seen—and until my *Bounty* studies, even heard of—Jamaica's other historic gardens.

All of Jamaica, it has been said, is a botanical garden. Inland, the mountain clefts and gullies, often coursed by streams, are tangled with greenery, the trees woolly and blurred with epiphytes, ferns, orchids and the night-scented, night-blooming cereus. An island with a total area of less than 4,000 square miles, Jamaica has 579 species of ferns alone, a higher density, it is believed, than anywhere else in the world. Epiphytes dangle from telephone wires; the forests are hung with flowering vines; often on this trip I thought of how Bligh and the men of the *Providence* must have been reminded here of the lush blue-green landscape of Tahiti.

But the emphasis on a *botanical* garden in particular is significant. Existing for study, experimentation and display, a botanical garden is encyclopedic, learnedly diverse, replete with exotic specimens. It is a stunning fact that in the natural garden of Jamaica, the majority of the island's defining plants were imported and disseminated by botanical ventures like those conducted by William Bligh. Few of Jamaica's important economic plants—cassava, pineapple, cedar, mahogany and pimento—are native, and most of the island's defining flora is exotic. In the 16th century, the Spanish brought in sugar cane, bananas and plantains, limes, oranges, ginger, coffee and a variety of European vegetables. The British, driving out the Spanish in 1655, were responsi-

UPPER LEFT: ERICH LESSING / ART RESOURCE, NY; LOWER LEFT: INTERFOTO / ALAMY; MAP: GUILBERT GATES

Slaves and indentured servants, pressed to harvest Jamaica's vast sugar cane fields, contributed to the wealth of British landowners, who in the 1700s searched for a cheap way to feed workers (below: cane cutters, about 1895). Breadfruit from the South Pacific provided nutrition and remains a staple for islanders. Eucalyptus, moldering in Cinchona (above), came from Australia.

ble for the mango, which by 1793, as Bligh noted, grew "luxuriantly, and . . . are plentifull all over the Island." Similarly, the glossy, red, pear-shaped ackee, poisonous if eaten unripe, and today the national food of Jamaica, came from West Africa, brought either by European slaver or African slave.

For it was not, of course, only Jamaica's flora that was imported. When Columbus first reached Jamaica in 1494, the island had been inhabited by the Taino, a northern Caribbean people. The first Africans arrived shortly thereafter, in 1513, as servants, herdsmen and cowboys, as well as slaves to the Spanish. Under British rule, slaves were imported in ever-increasing numbers to do the brutal work in the cane fields of the great sugar estates. Most, including the Comorantee, Mandingo, Ashanti and Yoruba, came from West Africa, but thousands of bondsmen, slaves in all but name, came from Ireland, where Oliver Cromwell was intent on the extermination of the Irish people; some speculate that the characteristic lilt in Jamaican speech comes from the Irish, not the English. Today, Jamaica's population of just under three million is descended from its many transplanted peoples—West African slaves; Irish, Scottish and Welsh bondsmen and servants; British soldiers; Chinese, Indian and Lebanese merchants; and English landowners. The native Taino, who virtually disappeared as a people within 30 years of the arrival of the Spanish, are today encountered only in relics of their language, in words such as "hammock" and "canoe," and the island's name—*Hamaika*, the "land of wood and water."

Jamaica has also attracted a striking number of accidental transplants, random wanderers, who, like the buoyant fruit of the *Barringtonia*, drifted ashore and took root. Such a transplant was Andreas Oberli, who came to Jamaica in 1978 and eventually stayed on. "This was after Allen and before Gilbert," he said, locating events in the Jamaican way, by their relationship to landmark hurricanes.

We were again navigating traffic out of Kingston, headed for another historic garden. Kingston's setting, between its magnificent natural harbor (the largest in the Caribbean) and the Blue Mountain foothills, should make it one of the most striking cities in the world; but even in this season of violent bougainvillea bloom, the traffic and sprawl overwhelm, and most visitors look wistfully to the hills, where we were headed. Now, on the narrow road that winds along the Hope River valley, we found ourselves navigating pedestrians, veering cars and goats. "Never in Jamaica has a car hit a goat," Andreas declared defiantly, as goats and their kids skipped and grazed along the precipitous roadsides. Shortly before the paved road ran out, he stopped again to point to the ridgeline above us, darkly profiled against the clouded white sky. A tree with a tufted crown, like a bottlebrush, could just, with guidance, be discerned. "Cinchona," he said.

Half an hour later, our four-wheel drive jeep lurched into the garden. Here, at the top of the island, the white sky settled determinedly upon us. Sometimes in sharp, dark silhouette, sometimes misted indistinctly, towering trees breasted the pressing clouds that trickled in white drifts and threads from where they boiled out of the valley. Andreas looked about him, pleased; things were in not-bad order. The grass was clipped and green with cloud dew; the raised brick beds, filled with old favorites—begonias, geraniums, masses of daylilies—were all well tended. The beds he had built himself, between 1982 and 1986, when he had been superintendent of the garden.

"The big trees were lost to the hurricanes," Andreas said. He had begun his duties in the wake of Allen (which hit in 1980) with the aid of two Peace Corps workers who had been assigned to him. "For the first year, we did nothing but drag and clear trees; we cut up or felled between two to three hun-

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CAROLINE ALEXANDER *wrote* The Bounty *and the forthcoming* The War That Killed Achilles. **GEORGE BUTLER***'s films include* Pumping Iron *and other documentaries.*

Get a taste of Jamaica with breadfruit recipes at Smithsonian.com/breadfruit

BOTTOM: MICHAEL GRAHAM-STEWART / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY INTERNATIONAL

dred." The debris gone, he had turned to reclaiming the garden. A ramshackle bungalow, dating from the first years of the garden's creation, had survived Allen, and on the grassy platform before it Andreas had laid the beds and fishpond, before moving down the slopes to more naturalistic plantings—the green stream of moss with its banks of polished bamboo, the azalea walk and avenue of ferns, the blue hill slope of agapanthus.

The origins of Cinchona Gardens lay in the abandonment of the garden at Bath, which had suffered from frequent severe floodings of the nearby Sulphur River, as well as its inconvenient distance from Kingston. Consequently, in 1862, the Jamaican colonial government established a new botanical garden at Castleton, some 20 miles north of Kingston, a decision that seems also to have inspired the afterthought of the Hill Gardens, as Cinchona was also known, which at nearly 5,000 feet is the highest in Jamaica. Originally, its generous allotment of 600 acres had been envisioned as a plantation of "Peruvian bark," or cinchona trees, from which the anti-malarial drug quinine is made. When the East Indian industry usurped the quinine market, plans for Cinchona shifted to the cultivation of temperate tropical plants; among other things, English planters had long harbored the hope of cultivating those necessities of life fondly associated with Home, such as the potato and the almighty cabbage, which, in this land of tropical abundance, were still found wanting.

Stately palms and winding walks imbue the Castleton Gardens with an aura of refinement (above), a reminder of the time when the rich and famous arrived in their own yachts. The novelist Ian Fleming, living on his Goldeneye estate, wrote his James Bond books here. Noel Coward (below: in tropical whites, 1950) led the way for ordinary tourists, who arrive by the planeload.

"Up here, we have European weeds," said Andreas, and pointed out the clover, dandelions and daisies that spangled the grass around the ruined station house. "A lot of stones were imported for building, such as sandstone and Carrara marble; they were shipped covered with hay that was afterwards fed to horses. The seed in their manure did not germinate in the lowlands, but they do well up here in this European climate."

At the edge of the mountain, the clouds briefly dissolved to reveal the green, sunlit valley, combed with small farming plots; then the mist closed in again, effacing the sky entirely, and it began to rain. The old station house, shown in photographs in the 1920s and 1930s as a trim little bungalow, hulked ruinously and uselessly behind us, offering no shelter, and we tramped wetly through the garden, past the Japanese cedar conifers *(Cryptomeria)* and the *Lost World* avenue of ferns.

Out of the dripping mist loomed a piratical figure, black of beard and with a stumping gait, who, although his face remained inscrutable, in the country way, greeted Andreas warmly. Glen Parke had worked with Andreas during his superintendence in the 1980s. Living in the nearby village of Westphalia, he was still employed as a gardener by the Ministry of Agriculture. The clipped lawn and weeded beds were partly his work, carefully maintained far from admiring eyes. He and Andreas embarked upon a short tour of old friends, remarking on a tender cinchona sapling that stood where there should have been a tree. "Yah, we lose him," said Glen sadly, of the sapling's predecessor.

Each of Jamaica's four great gardens, although established along similar principles, has acquired its own distinctive aura. Hope Gardens, in the heart of Kingston, evokes postcard pictures from the 1950s of public parks, gracious and vaguely suburban and filled with familiar favorites—lantana and marigolds—as well as exotics. Bath has retained its Old World character; it is the easiest to conjure as it must have looked in Bligh's time. Cinchona of the clouds is otherworldly. And Castleton, the garden established to replace Bath, fleetingly evokes that golden age of Jamaican tourism, when visitors arrived in their own yachts—the era of Ian Fleming and Noel Coward, before commercial air travel unloaded ordinary mortals all over the island.

A showcase of terraced, tropical glamour, Castleton is dotted with ornamental ponds, wound through by artful, cobbled pathways that lead hither and yon beneath the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 82

BOTTOM: LISA LARSEN / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

Under the Polish Sun

The memoirist trades Tuscany for northern light and the unexpected pleasures of Krakow and Gdansk

BY FRANCES MAYES

In 1990, when my husband, Ed, and I bought an abandoned villa in Tuscany, we hired three Polish workers to help us restore a major terrace wall. They were new immigrants, there for the money, and not happy to be out of their homeland. At lunchtime, we saw them opening cans of sausages, sauerkraut and other delectables they could not live without. On holidays they drove north in a battered car of some unrecognizable make to Wrocław, a 26-hour trip, where they had left children and wives. They returned with big gray cans of food so they did not have to eat the dreaded Italian pasta. They were gallant. With neat bows, they kissed my hand.

The Poles were over-the-top, full-out workers. They hardly paused. We used to say, "Take a break. Get some rest."

They always replied, "We can sleep in Poland."

We adopted the response. Anytime we want to push through a project, we remind each other, "We can sleep in Poland."

Now we are going. To sleep but even better to wake up and find ourselves in a language full of consonants, a history that haunts, a poetry we have loved, a cuisine of beets, sausage and vodka, a landscape of birch forests and a people so resilient they must have elastic properties in their DNA.

We fly into Krakow at dusk and step outside into balmy air. The taxi drivers, all wearing coats and ties, stand in a queue. Soon we are slipping through narrow streets, passing lamp-lit parks and glimpses of the Vistula River. We turn onto cobbled Ulica (street) Kanonicza, named for canons who lived in the regal palaces there. "You will be staying on the most beautiful street," the driver tells us. He points to number 19/21, where Pope John Paul II once lived. Noble inscriptions in Latin cap carved doorways, and through upstairs windows I see painted beamed ceilings. Our hotel, the Copernicus, reflects an exciting blend of old and new. The candlelit lobby, once the courtyard, is now glassed over and verdant with plants hanging from inside balconies. A grand piano seems to be waiting for Chopin to sweep in and pound out a mazurka. The manager points out 15th-century ceilings, murals of church fathers, botanical motifs and gothic-lettered hymns from the 16th century.

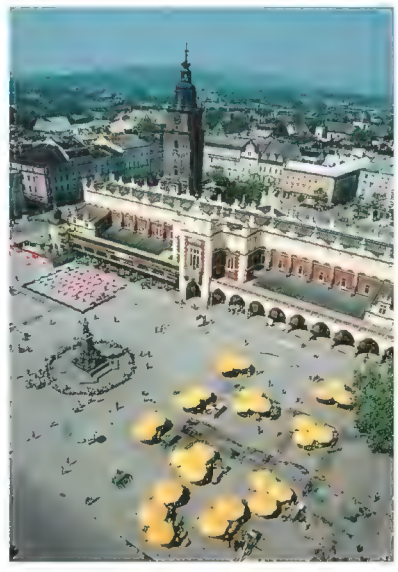
I experience the delicious shock of the foreign as we step out and walk along the lower walls of the massive Wawel Royal Castle complex, where kings and queens of Poland are enjoying their long rest in the cathedral. We turn into a swath of deep green as twilight seeps into dark. When medieval walls were demolished in 1807 and the moat drained, this space became, by the 1820s, Planty Park, which rings the old town and provides a civilized promenade.

We pass a Ukrainian restaurant, shops selling amber jewelry, and strolling Krakovians—newly out of their coats, no doubt—in the spring evening.

Krakow possesses a wealth of cultural treasures, including Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady With an Ermine* (opposite) and Wawel Royal Castle (above), where the country's kings lived.

"They look like my cousins," Ed remarks. He was raised in a Polish neighborhood in Winona, Minnesota. The relatives of his American-born parents immigrated from Kashubia in northern Poland, some in the 1830s, some during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, others as recently as 1900. Many other Poles from Kashubia also made their way to Winona as well.

We double back to the hotel, where dinner in the intimate, candlelit dining room nicely ends this travel day. When the waiter brings out an *amuse-bouche* of spicy salmon topped with cucumber sorbet, we know we're in good hands. Dumplings are light, with spinach and shrimp. We feast on duck, accompanied by parsley ice cream and roasted artichokes. Where's the sausage and potato? If they were on the menu tonight, they would be transformed by the masterful hand of Chef Marcin Filipkiewicz.



The Rynek Glowny (above: in the center of Krakow) was laid out in 1257 and is Europe's largest medieval square. "How many coffees can we drink?" the author writes. "I want to pause at each cardinal point in the square."

As we step outside

in the morning, the city is just awakening. Pretzel stands appear on almost every block. Choose a string of small pretzel rings, or round ones as big as a face—plain, salted or sprinkled with poppy seeds. Skinny trolleys seemingly straight out of 1910 run through the streets. In Krakowski Kredens, a food shop, we see crocks of lard with onion or bacon, thin ropes of sausages, big blood sausages and cunning little hams and pâtés. Confitures—such an array—remind me of Ed's first words after landing: "I've never seen so many fruit trees."

Suddenly, the market square of Krakow appears. Magnificent! The Rynek Glowny is the great piazza of Europe—Siena and Brussels notwithstanding. Only Venice's San Marco compares in scope, and Krakow's is more visually exciting. Because nothing in the old town could be built higher than the cathedral, the scale remains human. We're stunned by intact neo-Classical buildings with Renaissance, Baroque and Gothic touches. Spared from World War II bombing, the enormous space breathes Old World.

We take a slow promenade all the way around. On a warm, late April morning, everyone is outside, some under the umbrellas of outdoor cafés, some showing winter-pale faces to the sun. Krakow has some 170,000 students, and many of them are walking around or gathered at tables over formidable glasses of beer.

The Sukiennice, the medieval Cloth Hall, stands in the center of the Rynek, and the sweet Romanesque church of St. Adalbert—older than the square—is incongruously angled into a corner. The Cloth Hall, begun in the 13th century by the charmingly named Boleslaw the Chaste, now houses a gallery, an arcade of craft and souvenir stalls and the atmospheric 19th-century Noworolski Café. How many coffees can we drink? I want to pause at each cardinal point in the square and admire a new perspective. Spires, machicolations, towers, scrolls, turrets, whimsical stone rams, eagles, lizards—all lend endless variety. The flower vendors are favoring tulips today. I usually find mimes annoying but am charmed by one assuming the mien of a writer, all in brown at a café table, his pen poised over a notebook. Reminds me of writer's block.

St. Mary's, one of Krakow's most venerated churches, watches over the square, as does the statue of 19th-century poet Adam Mickiewicz. High on a pediment with a book in his hand, the poet now serves as a popular meeting point. We cross the square and look into St. Barbara's Church as well, but touring a Polish church feels awkward. So many people are praying that if you are just having a look, you're intruding.

Nearby we find the Czartoryski Museum, where Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady With an Ermine* lives. We saw her when she came to Italy for an exhibit, which was lucky because today her section of the museum is closed. She's one of four female portraits by da Vinci, and as enigmatic as the *Mona Lisa*.

Other pleasures we take in: Gypsy musicians, women on stools selling shaped breads, eggs from a basket and cloth-wrapped cheeses. So many bookstores! We stop in several to touch the volumes of favorite poets—Zbigniew Herbert, Wislawa Szymborska, Adam Zagajewski and Czeslaw Milosz, all profoundly conscious of history, full of layers of darkness and gorgeously suffused with wit. We happen upon the covered market, where we feast visually on radishes, kohlrabi, strawberries, possibly every sausage known to man, shoppers with baskets, and farm women in bold flowered scarves and aprons.

At midmorning, we pause at A. Blikle and indulge in its caramel walnut tart and hazelnut cream tart. "As good as Paris!" Ed declares. The espresso, too, is perfect. A mother feeds her baby girl bites of plum cake, causing her to bang enthusiastically on her stroller.

We come upon Ulica Retoryka—Rhetoric Street—where Teodor Talowski designed several brick houses in the late 19th-century. A grand corner building adorned with a stone frog playing a mandolin and musical scores incised across the facade is called "Singing Frog." Another is inscribed "Festina Lente," the Renaissance concept of "make haste slowly," which I admire. Talowski's arches, inset balconies, fancy brickwork and inscriptions reveal a playful mind, while his solid forms

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FRANCES MAYES' Every Day in Tuscany *will be published in March 2010. She lives in North Carolina and Cortona, Italy.*

MR. & MRS. BERNARD DESJEUX / CORBIS; MAP: GUILBERT GATES; P. 65 JON HICKS / CORBIS; WOLFGANG KAEHLER; ILKER GURER; P. 62 EDIMEDIA / CORBIS; PP. 62-63 CHRISTOPHE BOISVIEUX / CORBIS

Krakow was the capital of Poland until the end of the 16th century and still exudes Old World charm; its historic center, marked by the soaring Gothic twin towers of St. Mary's Church (above), has been designated a Unesco World Heritage site. But the city is also a place of street musicians (right: a Ukrainian playing the *bandura*) and enticing fare (below: pretzels).

and materials show a pre-Modernist architect at work.

We walk across the river to the Kazimierz district, founded as a separate town in 1335 by Casimir the Great. By 1495, Jews driven out of Krakow settled here. Now local publications call Kazimierz trendy. Around a pleasant plaza surrounded by trees are a few cafés, two synagogues and restaurants serving Jewish food—all are hopeful markers. I can see how it might become trendy indeed, though I wonder whether any of the 1,000 Jews remaining in the city would choose to live in this district historied by extreme persecution. Ed is handed a yarmulke as we stop at Remu'h Synagogue, where two rabbis quietly read the Torah. Light inside the white walls of the synagogue hits hard and bright, but the adjoining cemetery, destroyed by the Germans and later restored, seems eerily quiet under trees just leafing. This neighborhood speaks to the riven heritage of Krakow's Jewish culture—mere remnants of the residents who were forced out, first to the nearby Ghetto, then to a worse fate.

Tombstones (above: Remu'h Cemetery) testify to Krakow's Jewish heritage. During WWII, some 18,000 Jews were taken from the Krakow Ghetto to concentration camps (below: Birkenau).

Next we find the Podgorze district, which would seem ordinary had I not read of the rabid and heroic events that occurred in these courtyards, houses and hospitals. A memorial in the Plac Bohaterow Getta (Heroes of the Ghetto) commemorates the Jews who were gathered here, with only the belongings they could carry, before deportation to death camps. The Plac memorial consists of 70 metal chairs, symbols of the abandoned furniture of the some 18,000 Jews who were taken away from the Ghetto. Overlooking the memorial is the Eagle Pharmacy of Tadeusz Pankiewicz, who with three brave women employees, aided Ghetto residents with medicines and information. Stories like this one and Oskar Schindler's (his factory is nearby) are small victories in the deluge of evil and sorrow. A small green building facing the square was once the secret headquarters of the Resistance. Now it's a pizzeria. Ed says, "You come to these neighborhoods more to see what's not here rather than what is."

We hire a guide to take us to the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau. At Auschwitz, a glass-walled room displays 4,000 pounds of tangled hair; another room holds shoes and the pink sandals with kitten heels that some young girl wore there. In the sleeping quarters, Gregory, our guide, points out names in tiny handwriting near the ceiling, scrawled from the top bunk by a few of the prisoners. Approximately 1.1 million Jews perished at the two main Auschwitz camps, along with at least 70,000 non-Jewish Poles. Of the 3.3 million Jews in Poland before the war, only some 300,000 survived. Often lost in the horror of that statistic is that approximately 1.8 million non-Jewish Poles—ordinary people, Resistance fighters, intellectuals—also died at the hands of the Nazis. I notice a dented teakettle in the mound of everyday objects, and the gallery of ID photos, grim faces lining the halls—their eyes burn with foreknowledge of their fate. Seeing the settings of atrocities turns out to be different from what you experience from books and documentaries: a blunt physical feeling strikes, a visceral awareness of bodies and souls that perished.

Grasses and trees have softened Auschwitz. "Then, grass would have been eaten," Gregory says. Birkenau (Auschwitz II) is starker. It is the most monstrous of the many—Gregory says 50—concentration camps in the Krakow area, with its flat fields of chimneys, still standing after fleeing Germans torched the buildings and records, making it impossible to know exact death tolls. Enough structures remain to tell the tale. We file through bleak sleeping quarters, then the toilet barracks, four long concrete rows with holes over gutters below. "Guard duty here was prized," Gregory tells us, "they got to inspect excrement for jewelry the prisoners swallowed."

Outside Birkenau, three people pick lettuces in a field. Has enough time gone by that no whiff of smoke, no mote of DNA settles on the leaves of their spring salads? I remember a line from the Nobel Prize-winning poet Wislawa Szymborska: *Forgive me distant wars, for bringing flowers home.*

First stop the next morning: Cmentarz Rakowicki, founded outside Krakow's Old Town in 1803 by the ruling Austrians, who thought cemeteries in populated areas caused epidemics. I like wandering in cemeteries, partly because you can tell much about a culture by how they bury their dead and partly because they're often surpassingly lovely. Here plum and cherry trees bloom along lanes crowded with Gothic chapels, hovering angels and sorrowing women. If I lived here, I'd come often for the warming rays of sun falling on mossy crosses and stone lambs. Gregory tactfully says we can linger, but we move on to Nowa Huta, where more than 200,000 of Krakow's 757,000 residents live.

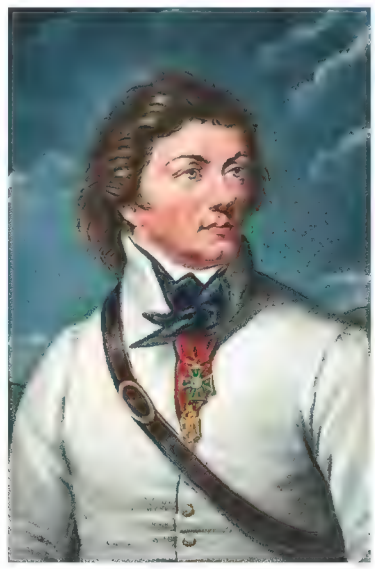
In 1949, during the Soviet Union's dismal sway over Poland, the Communist authorities began this development as well as the pollution-belching steelworks about six miles from central Krakow. Workers' families who'd never had running water flocked to live in the planned community but were soon disenchanted with working conditions, pollution and the lack of a church. Sixty years on, the huge gray apartment blocks have retained their austerity, but now trees have matured and open

CHRISTOPHE BOISVIEUX / CORBIS; JON HICKS / CORBIS

spaces make the neighborhoods friendlier. The steel mill has not been entirely cleaned up, but it no longer spews soot over everything. The arcaded central plaza was modeled loosely on Piazza del Popolo in Rome. When we look closely, we see Renaissance touches on balustrades and windows. If only the buildings' facades were not heavy gray.

Near Nowa Huta, we see my favorite Krakow church, part of a 13th-century Cistercian abbey, built near where a cross was found floating in the river. It's filled with hundreds of ex-votos, 16th-century frescoes and soaring arched columns in pale stone. Pilgrims making their way on their knees to a statue of Mary have worn paths in the marble. Strikingly, the side-aisle ceilings and vaulting are painted in traditional folk flower designs, with a bit of Art Nouveau flourish.

Poland has a curious tradition of memorializing its dead with earth mounds; the country has 250 of them. Early ones may be prehistoric or Celtic, no one knows for sure. Near Krakow, one commemorates Krak, the ancient king and namesake of the city, though excavations have found no sign of his burial. Another honors his daughter Wanda, who drowned herself rather than marry a German prince. We drive up to see the mound honoring the Polish independence fighter Tadeusz Kosciuszko and built in 1820-23 with wheelbarrows of dirt. He's also the American Revolutionary War hero whose name we butchered in fifth grade. A warrior as well as an engineer specializing in fortifications, his skills took him to many battlefields, including Saratoga in upstate New York. From this steep 34-yard-high cone with a spiraling path, you can see in the distance the mound of Krak. I like hearing that earth from Kosciuszko's American battle sites forms a part of the memorial.



Polish heroes: Tadeusz Kosciuszko (above) fought for independence for both Poles and Americans, and Lech Walesa (below) began the nation's Solidarity movement in Gdansk in 1980.

At dusk, we take a last walk in the old heart of Krakow to the restaurant Ancora. Chef Adam Chrzastowski's cooking with plum, cherry and other fruit confitures exemplifies how he reinterprets tradition: he serves venison with onion and grape marmalade, his duck with a black currant and ginger one. Ed tries the cold, cold vodka with pepper and an oyster. One gulp or you're lost. Other delights: scallops wrapped in prosciutto, pear sorbet, chocolate soufflé with a surprise hint of blue cheese. It's late when Adam comes out and chats with us. Inspired by his grandmother's cooking and a sojourn in Shanghai, he moves Polish food into the bright future the country appears headed for as well.

The GPS in our rented Renault took us quickly out of Krakow, but the freeway soon petered out, dumping us onto two-lane roads interrupted by stoplights and road repairs. Town names are all consonants, with maybe a "y" thrown in, so we forget where we've passed, where we're headed. Ed is a blood-sport driver, but his training on Italian autostradas does no good; we're stuck behind people who poke.

The road parts fields of yellow weeds and roadside lilacs about to open. Just as I've praised the GPS, Ed discovers that we are lost, heading not north toward Gdansk but west toward the Czech border. Bucolic pleasures evaporate as we try to reprogram. The little dervish inside the GPS wants to go to Prague, though as we retrace, it seems to decide on Sarajevo. Every few minutes it twirls us off course. I become the navigator, spreading out a huge map on my lap. The GPS croaks sporadically from the floor.

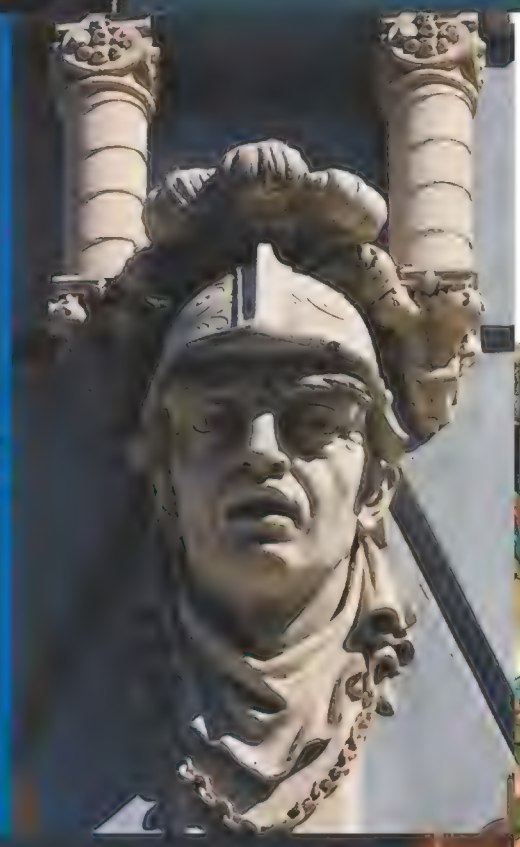
When we reach Gdansk, we easily find our hotel on the Motlawa River. An exquisite manor house from 1728 that escaped the bombings of the war, Hotel Podewils maintains an elegant, ladylike presence. Our room has windows on two sides, and I walk back and forth, watching fishermen, yachts and a scape of Gdansk's old town. The tall structure predominating the view I identify in my guidebook as the medieval crane that hoisted goods from the granary to barges below. Like most of Gdansk, it was restored after the leveling of the city at the end of World War II.

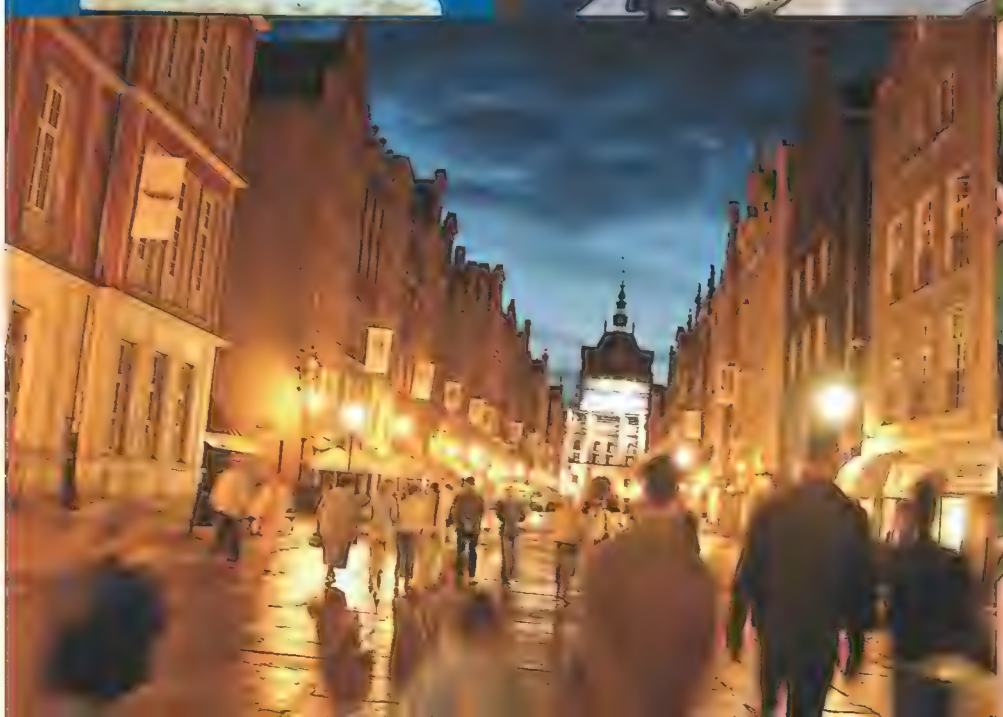
The Ulica Dluga, the city's main thoroughfare, is lined with outrageously ornate houses of ocher, dusty aquamarine, gold, peach, pea green and pink. One house is white, the better to show off its gold bunches of grapes and masterful stucco work. Facades are frescoed with garlands of fruit, mythological animals or courtiers with lutes, while their tops are crowned with classical statues, urns and iron ornaments. The houses, deep and skinny, have front and back staircases and connected rooms without corridors. At one of the houses, Dom Uphagena, we're able to explore inside. I love the decorated walls of each room—one with panels of flowers and butterflies on the doors, one painted with birds and another with fruit.

The Hanseatic League, a guild of northern cities, originally formed to protect salt and spice trade routes, thrived from the 13th through the 17th centuries. The powerful association grew to control all major trade in fish, grain, amber, fur, ore and textiles. Gdansk was perfectly situated to take advantage of shipping from the south, traveling down the Vistula River to the Baltic. The ornamentation in this city reveals that the powerful Hanseatic merchants and their wives had sophisticated taste and a mile-wide streak of delight in their surroundings.

It's moving to think of the Poles accomplishing this loving

BETTMANN / CORBIS (2)





Largely destroyed during WWII, a reborn Gdansk endures (clockwise from above: Gdansk Crane on the Motlawa River; detail from Hans Memling's *Last Judgment* triptych; pedestrian thoroughfare of Dlugi Targ; statue representing fame atop the Golden Gate; and (center) sculpture on a building's facade.

and masterful restoration of their destroyed city after the war, especially as they did not share in the good fortune of funds from the Marshall Plan and, to boot, were handed over to the Soviet Union by Churchill, Stalin and Truman. The recovery in Gdansk seems as miraculous as the 1980s rise of the Solidarity movement in the shipyard here. I look for Lech Walesa, who now lectures around the world after having served as president in the 1990s, on the streets. His transformation from labor organizer into national hero changed history when his union's protests led to others throughout Poland. The movement he started with a shout of defiance eventually broke the Soviet domination. He must revel in the palpable energy of the new Poland. The schoolchildren we see everywhere are a prime example: they are on the move, following their teachers to historic sites. Boisterous and playful, they easily symbolize new directions; even the teachers seem to be having fun.

Poles rejoiced when poet Wislawa Szymborska (above) won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1996, as they had done when Karol Jozef Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II (below) in 1978.

Amber traders plied

the Baltic for centuries. At the Amber Museum, we see medieval crosses, beads, amulets and modern jewelry studded with amber, as well as snail shells, dragonflies, fleas, animal hair and feathers suspended in it. Baltic amber (succinite), known for its high quality, was formed from the fossilized resin of ancient conifers, which fell into Scandinavian and other northern European rivers and traveled to sea. Some of the museum specimens date back to the Neolithic era, when pieces were found washed up on shore. Later, collectors scooped amber from the seafloor, estuaries and marshes. As early as 1477, Gdansk had a guild of amber craftsmen.

We explore Stare Miasto, another historic section, with its grand gristmill on a stream, churches with melodic bells and the Old Town Hall from 1587, one of the few buildings to survive the war. In St. Nicholas, also a survivor, we happen to arrive just as an organist begins to practice. Piercing, booming music fills every atom of the dramatic and ornate church and transports the prayers of the devout toward heaven.

We trek to the National Museum to see the Hans Memling *Last Judgment* triptych. Possibly pirate booty, it appeared in the city around 1473. Later, Napoleon sent it off to Paris for a while, but Gdansk was later able to reclaim it. The museum seems to have a Last Judgment focus; the subject recurs in the rooms of Polish painters of the 19th and 20th centuries. The concept of renewed life must resonate deeply in a city that literally had to rise from ashes.

On our last day we engage a guide, Ewelina, to go with us into Kashubia to seek traces of Ed's relatives. "When did you see Poland really start to change?" I ask her.

"Solidarity, of course. But three signs woke us up. Having a Polish pope—that was so important back in '78. Then the Nobels coming to two of our poets, to Czeslaw Milosz—and we didn't even know about this Pole in exile—in 1980, then Wislawa Szymborska, that was 1996. The outside confirmation gave us pride." She glances out the window and sighs. "Those three events I can't overemphasize. We thought maybe we can do something." She tells us that many immigrant Poles are coming home, bringing considerable energy back to their country. Around 200,000 left England in 2008, both educated Poles and workers, lured home by opportunities created by European Union money given to Poland, Britain's bad economy and rising wages in Poland. "This is good, all good," she says.

Ed has some place names, so we drive west for two hours to the castle town of Bytow, then through forests carpeted with white flowers. Shortly, we come to tiny Ugoszcz. Without Ewelina, we would have found nothing, but she directs us to stop for directions, and we follow as she marches up to the priest's house. To our surprise he answers, takes our hands with metacarpal-crushing handshakes, brings us inside and pulls out old ledgers with brown ink calligraphy recording baptisms back to the 1700s. He's utterly familiar with these books. As Ed says the family names, he flips pages and calls out other names well known in Minnesota. He locates grandmothers, great- and great-great-uncles and aunts, great-great-grandfathers, some who left, some who stayed. He copies two certificates in Latin and Polish and gives them to Ed. One, from 1841, records the birth of his great-grandfather Jacobus Kulas; the other, from 1890, records that of his grandmother Valeria Ursula Breske. We visit the 13th-century church across the road, a wooden beauty, where relatives were baptized.

Driving back to Gdansk, Ed is stopped for speeding. The young officers seem intrigued that they have caught Americans. Ewelina explains that Ed has come all this way to find his ancestors. They look at his license and ask him about his family. "Oh, lots of Kleismits in the next town," says one. They let us go without a fine.

Ewelina tells us we must see the Art Nouveau sea resort Sopot. Ed wants to visit Bialowieza, the primeval forest with roaming bison. I'd like to see Wroclaw, where our Polish workers lived. Although we've slept well in Poland, the best trips make you feel more awake than ever. On the way to the airport, Ed gazes dreamily at cherry trees whizzing by the window. Just as I check my calendar for when we might return, he turns and says, "Shall we come back next May?"

JACEK BEDNARCZYK / EPA / CORBIS; MATT SHONFELD / REDUX; P. 68 DAVID SUTHERLAND / CORBIS; GREGORY WRONA (2); ART RESOURCE, NY; ATL ANTIDE PHOTOTRAVEL / CORBIS

Journey to Torun, Copernicus' hometown, at Smithsonian.com/Torun

The Long Way Home

The noted world traveler fulfills a boyhood dream—to drive across America in the spirit of Kerouac, Steinbeck and other poets of the open road

BY PAUL THEROUX

The mixed blessing of America is that anyone with a car can go anywhere. The visible expression of our freedom is that we are a country without roadblocks. And a driver's license is our identity. My dream, from way back—from high school, when I first heard the name Kerouac—was of driving across the United States. The cross-country trip is the supreme example of the journey as the destination.

Travel is mostly about dreams—dreaming of landscapes or cities, imagining yourself in them, murmuring the bewitching place names, and then finding a way to make the dream come true. The dream can also be one that involves hardship, slogging through a forest, paddling down a river, confronting suspicious people, living in a hostile place, testing your adaptability, hoping for some sort of revelation. All my traveling life, 40 years of peregrinating Africa, Asia, South America and Oceania, I have thought constantly of home—and especially of the America I had never seen. "I discovered I did not know my

Fleeing the clogged freeways of Los Angeles, the author set forth into an America both lonelier and lovelier than the one he expected to find.

own country," Steinbeck wrote in *Travels with Charley,* explaining why he hit the road at age 58.

The line between reality and fantasy can blur in Las Vegas, where a replica Arc de Triomphe has "the texture of stale cake."

My idea was not to linger anywhere, but to keep on the move, as though to create in my mind one long panning shot, from Los Angeles to Cape Cod; to get up each morning and set off after breakfast, going as far as I wished, and then find a place to sleep. Generations of drivers have obviously felt the same way, since the country has become a set of natural divisions, from Los Angeles, say, to Las Vegas, Las Vegas to Sedona, Sedona to Santa Fe—but I am getting ahead of myself.

Speeding east in late spring rain from the Pacific waves lapping at the edge of Los Angeles Airport, disentangling myself from Los Angeles, struggling from freeway to freeway, I was reminded that much of my life has been spent this way—escaping from cities. I wanted to see the glimmering spaces in the distances that lay between big cities, the road that unrolled before me. Los Angeles was a complex set of on-ramps and merging freeways, like a gigantic game of snakes and ladders that propelled me though the bungaloid body of the city to deliver me to Rancho Cucamonga. Beyond the thinner scattering of houses was the sight of bare hills, a distinct canyon and a glimpse of desert as I cruised into Barstow, California. Then I was happy.

I was reminded that first day and every day after that we are a restless nation, rattling from road to road; a nation that had largely abandoned long-distance trains because they did not go to enough places. It is in our nature as Americans to want to drive everywhere, even into the wilderness. The nature writer Edward Abbey decried in *Desert Solitaire* the fact that access roads were planned for Arches National Monument in Utah when he was a ranger there. Around Barstow, I was thinking of Abbey, who once exclaimed to a friend that the most glorious vision he'd beheld in his life was "the sight of a billboard burning against the sky."

What made Barstow's billboards a peculiar blight was the contrast with everything that lay around them—the landscape that was so stark and dramatic as a brooding expanse of withered shrubs and fat cactuses, the stony roads that seemed

MARTIN PARR / MAGNUM PHOTOS; MAP: GUILBERT GATES; PP. 70-71 TODD BIGELOW / AURORA / IPN

to lead nowhere, the bleak and beautiful backdrop that seemed as though no one had laid a hand on it, with lively colorations at a distance and up close so dry, like a valley of bones looking as though they could not support life. I had seen deserts in Patagonia and Turkmenistan, northern Kenya and Xinjiang in western China; but I had never seen anything like this. The revelation of the Mojave Desert was (peering past the billboards) not just its illusion of emptiness but its assertive power of exclusion, the low bald hills and far-off mountains looking toasted and forbidding under the darkening sky.

That sky slipped lower, scattered rain that quickly evaporated on the road, and then gouts of marble-size hailstones swept over the road ahead, like a plague of mothballs. And in that whitening deluge I could make out the Ten Commandments, set out by the roadside in the manner of Burma-Shave signs, You Shall Not Murder . . . You Shall Not Commit Adultery, like a word to the wise, until the state line into Nevada, and just beyond, the little town of Primm, overshadowed by its big bulking casinos.

I turned off the super-slab to travel the slower parallel road away from the speeding cars. This route took me past Henderson, and its empty malls, and soon up ahead the lights and the tall hotels.

I had never seen Las Vegas before. I was driving down the Strip, which was like the midway of the largest imaginable carnival—a free-for-all, with masks and bingeing. Passing me were slow-moving trucks, pulling mobile billboards that advertised girls for hire and restaurants, magicians, singers, shows. The hotels and casinos were shaped like Oriental palaces, with turrets and waterfalls, and familiarly, the Eiffel Tower, the Great Sphinx guarding a glassy pyramid, the Arc de Triomphe that had the texture of stale cake.

The city of fun houses dazzled me for a day, until my eyes became habituated to the scene, and then I was depressed. Yet Las Vegas is in its way as American as a lobster pot, a lighthouse, a field of corn, a red barn; but it is more. Unlike those iconic images, Las Vegas represents the fulfillment of childish fantasies—easy money, entertainment, sex, risk, elbowroom, self-indulgence. As a city without limits, it can go on spreading into the desert that surrounds it, reinventing itself as long as the water holds out.

No one can satirize Las Vegas; it satirizes itself much more effectively, thriving on self-mockery.

"I was so drunk last night I puked all over myself," a man said to me at breakfast, sounding delighted. "Like I was really drunk. It was great. I didn't know where I was. I just fell down. I don't even know how I got back to my room!"

A manic eagerness penetrated the place, like forced laughter; the object was to have a good time, no matter the cost. I loitered, I nosed in the casinos, I saw the "Love." This show, Beatles songs brought to life on bungee cords and trapezes and high wires, was appropriate to Las Vegas, which is, for good and ill, a circus, but an interactive one, where the visitors are also participants—part-time clowns, floozies, risk-takers. But on a visit to the Liberace Museum on East Tropicana, lured by the lovely hills, I kept going, to Boulder Highway, heading southeast down the open road.

On Route 93, through the mountainous desert, along the Art Deco lip of Hoover Dam, I passed 50 motorcyclists flying American flags crossing the dam and saluting as they did so, another glory of the road.

Less than 100 miles farther, I swung off the road at Kingman, Arizona, which is a crossroads, the Interstate meeting old Route 66. This little town and truck stop was also associated with Timothy McVeigh, the unspeakable Oklahoma City bomber, who used Kingman as a base—he worked here, plotted here and holed up in a local trailer park. Knowing this history gave this road junction in the desert place a sinister aura of anonymity.

This country runs as efficiently as it does because of trucks. They are everywhere. They can go where there are no trains: they penetrate to the smallest towns. And truckers—tough, resolute, willing—constitute one of the great traveling fraternities in America. They know every road.

Long-term parking: A 1932 Studebaker, placed near the old roadbed of Route 66 in in Arizona, recalls the highway's glory days.

Did I say "fraternity"? It is also a sorority. The truckers fueling in Kingman that day were mostly women, co-drivers with their husbands. Elaine and Casey were gassing up and grumbling about fuel prices. "I'd make more money baby-sitting," said Elaine, who was headed for New England.

"What do you think should happen?"

Casey, a short, stout woman of 50 or so, said, "I'll tell you. All the trucks stopping altogether—every truck in America—for about four days. That's going to put up the prices of shipping, but it'll make the point."

Twenty miles out of Kingman I obeyed the Watch for Elk sign and turned south off the Interstate on slower, narrower Route 93 toward Wikieup, through butter-colored hills and deep green ravines, and after some miles to an even narrower road that led northeast toward Prescott National Forest. The land was thick with fat, wind-sculpted junipers in my long climb up Mingus Mountain on a switchback road to the 7,000-foot ridge, as far from the stereotype of desert Arizona as one is likely to find.

And another reward on this back road was the old mile-high mining town of Jerome, a restored settlement clinging to

DEIRDRE BRENNAN / REDUX

the mountainside. In the distance, past Verde Valley, were the almost-dusty pastels, the ochers and purples and pinks and oranges in the smooth cliffs of Sedona. These happy battlements and looming canyons invited me farther off the road, where I found a hotel spa and signed up for a massage.

That was another lesson of the open road: if you don't like what you see in Las Vegas, a day's drive will take you through a natural forest to a pastel paradiso. I would have stayed longer—but this was a road trip, I reminded myself: the journey was the destination.

On my way to Santa Fe, heading east from Flagstaff into New Mexico, the advertised feature of the desert was the crater of a meteorite on the way to Winslow. But really the desert itself was the feature, under a blue canopy of sky. Here and there a Land for Sale sign, with an arrow pointing into the heat-shimmering emptiness; and the sight in the far distance of a tiny dot of habitation, a small house-trailer sitting deep in the desert wilderness, the living symbol of American elbowroom.

Passing a billboard in the desert—"Entering Navajo Country"—I checked my map and saw that the whole of this northeastern quadrant of Arizona is the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation, the Painted Desert visible in the great striated walls of reddish cliff faces at the northerly horizon.

Weather in the Great Plains can be "fearsome and satisfying," with storm clouds like an "iron-dark wall" (near Sand Hills, Nebraska).

Travel usually implies seeing a place once and moving on; but this became a trip in which I made lists of places I'd return to—Prescott, and Sedona, and now Gallup, New Mexico, where I'd happily go mountain-biking or hiking in the high desert, or visiting the people who possessed the country before we claimed it as ours.

I stopped at the town of Thoreau just long enough to establish whether it was named for the author of *Walden* and was told that this was not the case—was not even pronounced the same, but sounded more like my own name said correctly (Ther-oo). By late afternoon I was rounding Albuquerque and arrived in Santa Fe in the clear light of early evening.

Santa Fe, mild in May at 7,000 feet, was a monochromatic town of tastefully manufactured adobe. I felt no compulsion to return to Santa Fe. I left the next day, driving through the unexpectedly green and rolling hills, to pick up Interstate 40, old Route 66 with a face-lift. Sixty miles on I used the offramp at Santa Rosa, to verify the unlikely fact that this was one of the more important scuba-diving destinations in the Southwest desert, and also for the pleasure of looking more closely at the small town, glittering in the desert sunlight, bisected by the Pecos River.

At a local diner, I met Manuel and Jorge, of Basque descent, men in their late 70s. They had spent their working lives raising sheep and cattle and were now retired, their children scattered throughout New Mexico. I asked what the town had been like when it was a stop on Route 66.

"Very busy," Manuel said. "And there was more rain then. But now we're in the End Times and everything is changing."

"I have the feeling that you read that in the Bible."

"Yes, I am born again."

"Tell me something about scuba diving here," I asked Jorge.

"It's the best—though I haven't done it," he said. "We have lots of lakes, too."

Farther down I-40, across the state line and looming at lunchtime, was the Texas city of Amarillo, near the center of the Panhandle. I stopped and had a steak, gassed the car again and set off into a different-looking desert, stonier, with clusters of junipers softening its appearance. Nearer Oklahoma, green turned to lush, and then to a great grassy expanse with browsing cattle and tall Texan bushy-boughed trees. Cattle and grassland, trees and meadows, from Shamrock all the way to the border and the even greener pastures of Oklahoma.

Wide-eyed, because it was my first look at the heartland, I saw Oklahoma as a ravishing pastoral, widely spaced towns proclaiming on enormous billboards their local heroes: Erick ("Home of Roger Miller, King of the Road"); Elk City ("Home of Miss America, 1981"). And at Yukon ("Home of Garth Brooks"), I could have hung a left and driven down Garth Brooks Boulevard.

I had always associated this part of America with dramatic weather—tornados, searing heat, thunderstorms. My expectations were met as dark pinnacles of storm clouds massed in the big sky ahead, creamy and marbled at their peaks and almost black below. This was not just a singular set of clouds but an entire storm front, visible in the distance and as wide as the plains—I could not see where it began or ended. The storm was formally configured, as a great iron-dark wall, as high as the sky, bulking over the whole of western Oklahoma, it seemed: the vertical clouds like darkening watchtowers.

This was fearsome and satisfying, especially the croaky weather warnings interrupting the music on the radio. I approached the towering storm and was soon engulfed by hail, wind and dark curtains of rain slashing across the flooded road.

PAUL THEROUX's *travel book* Ghost Train to the Eastern Star *is now out in paperback. His forthcoming novel is* A Dead Hand.

JIM RICHARDSON / NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK

MARK PETERSON / REDUX

In Oklahoma City, 168 empty chairs stand for lives lost in the 1995 bombing. The memorial "is the most peaceful . . . place in the city."

There was nowhere to stop, so I just slowed down, with everyone else. After an hour, I had passed through this wall of weather and was entering the dry, sunlit outskirts of Oklahoma City.

This relatively young city—it dates only from 1890—a tidy, welcoming place of broad streets, has a reputation for being God-fearing and hard-working ("Work Conquers All" is the state motto). Since 1995 the city has been known for one traumatic event, the bomb outrage by the murderer Timothy McVeigh, who had drifted here from Kingman, parking a rental truck full of explosives that leveled the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people, many of them women and children. The site was walking distance from my downtown hotel. Surrounded by trees, with some of the bomb-cracked walls still standing, the memorial is the most peaceful and spiritual place in the city.

"Everyone who was in the city has a memory of it," D. Craig Story, a local attorney, told me. "I was 50 blocks away in my office that morning. I had just picked up the phone to make a call. The big window of my office bowed in—didn't break but looked like it was going to turn into a bubble, the air pushing it. The sound of the blast came a few seconds later. Then the news of it."

I said, "This seems like the last place such a thing would happen."

"That was one of the reasons. At first we had no idea why we were chosen for this. But it was because this is such a quiet place. Trust. Good people. No security. Very simple to gain access—to park a truck in a street, even at a federal building, then walk away. We were the easiest target." He shook his head. "So many children . . . "

Leaving Oklahoma City past the Kickapoo Casino, through Pottawatomie County and the towns of Shawnee and Tecumseh, I came to Checotah and passed a billboard, "Home of Carrie Underwood—American Idol 2005," and wondered whether billboards, like bumper stickers, suggested the inner life of a place. Farther east another billboard advised in large print: "Use the Rod on Your Child and Save Their Life."

The road through eastern Oklahoma was lined with shaggy trees and broad meadows, all the way to Arkansas. The straight, flat, fast I-40, which I'd been using, with detours, all the way from Arizona, now followed the general contour and sometimes the course of the Arkansas River, a major feeder into the Mississippi and the waterfront of Little Rock. Little Rock, the name, had been on my mind since I'd been a boy. It signified racial confrontation, the most divisive American issue of my school days. Black students exactly my age were at first kept from attending Central High when it became integrated in 1957; finally President Eisenhower sent in the 101st Airborne Division to ensure their entrance.

I drove past Central High, a lugubrious building, then

headed to the Clinton Library, looking like a prettified trailer home cantilevered off the bank of the muddy river. But this riverfront, where I had lunch at the Flying Saucer café, was the liveliest part of what seemed to me a melancholy city.

All the way to Memphis I dodged the big scary trucks, and also realized that I had judged Arkansas a little too harshly, because the eastern part of the state was rich in agriculture, with plowed fields and sloping woods, as far as the Mississippi. Monumental in its size and its slowness, meandering through the middle of the great country, the river is a symbol of the life and history of the land, the "strong brown god" in the words of T. S. Eliot, who was born upstream in St. Louis.

The approach from the west, seeing Memphis grandly arranged on the bluff of the far bank, satisfied my sense of being a romantic voyeur. I found my hotel—the Peabody, famous for its resident ducks; and at the shop in its lobby I met the man who claimed to have sold Elvis his first fancy clothes. Historic Beale Street was just a few blocks away: this quarter mile of pavement, advertising itself as Home of the Blues and Birthplace of Rock and Roll, was also the best place to find a drink and dinner—B.B. King's restaurant and blues club or the Pig on Beale farther down the block.

Once called "the underworld" for its seedy saloons, Beale Street in Memphis is now best known as the "Home of the Blues."

By design and intention, mine was not a leisurely trip. I drove home in installments. Traveling, slapping my map and trying to make sense of the transitions, I was constantly asking people directions. I always got help without any suspicion. My rental car's New York license plates aroused friendly curiosity all over the West and the South. At first I regretted that I did not know the South better; and then I began to think of this deficit as a travel opportunity, reflecting on the South as I had once contemplated parts of Europe or Asia: the dream of traveling through what was to me not just an unknown region but one that promised hospitality.

This feeling stayed with me all the way through the rolling hills to Nashville, where over lunch in a diner, I was greeted by the people at the next table, who saw I was alone and wanted me to feel welcome. I drove north on I-65, from Nashville into Kentucky. It was a special day in Owensboro, where a local man, Specialist Timothy Adam Fulkerson, killed in action near Tikrit, Iraq, was being honored: a section of U.S. 231 was being named for him, giving this country road a deeper meaning.

Kentucky, well tended and fenced, and the soft green of its fields and hills, the sight of horses and farms, made it seem an orderly Eden, parklike—another place to return to. This part of the state was rich in classic names—Lebanon and Paris, but Athens and Versailles had been tamed into "Ay-thens" and "Ver-sails."

One of the accidental themes of this road trip was my encounters with New Americans—the Iranian at the rental agency in Los Angeles, the Chinese gamblers in Las Vegas and my Ethiopian taxi drivers; the Somalis—robed, veiled, moving in a group of nine—I encountered in a Kinko's in Arizona; the man from Eritrea in Memphis, and here in Lexington, Mohamed from Egypt, in his convenience store.

"It's no fun to be single here if you're an Egyptian," he said. "But I'm married to a girl from Paris"—15 miles away—"and this is a good place to raise a family."

Passing the brick houses and quiet streets of Lexington, I continued through green hills, bumped along a corner of Ohio, and arrived in Charleston, West Virginia—a state capital that is more like a small town, with a population of around 50,000. I was in time for lunch at a Mexican restaurant. I merely happened upon it, as I found other good places on the road. Often, I asked a passerby— "Where's a great place to eat?" and I always got a helpful referral.

Ten days into my road trip I began wondering if I were perhaps pushing it a little too hard. But wasn't the whole point to keep going down the proud highway? The thrill is in the moving, gaining ground, watching the landscape change, stopping on impulse.

Then I met Steve the biker, out on I-79 at a rest stop, somewhere between Burnsville and Buckhannon, and he made me feel as though I had been dawdling. I had swung by for gas. Steve had stopped to adjust the strap on his motorcycle helmet. He had a new bike and was traveling from Omaha, Nebraska, to Alexandria, Virginia—in two days. He'd left St. Louis earlier that morning and had already traveled almost 600 miles—and was aiming to be home tonight, about 300 miles to go.

"I don't get it," I said.

"This is the newest Kawasaki," Steve said. "I can do 110 in first gear and I still have five more gears." He smiled a little. "I did 165 yesterday."

"And you don't get pulled over for speeding?"

"I'm a small profile," he said. "I'm under the radar."

Instead of following him up the Interstate, I turned east on mellow-looking Route 50 and meandered through Grafton, Fellowsville, Mount Storm and Capon Bridge—heading in the general direction of Gettysburg. I count the drive through West Virginia as distinctly memorable—there was hardly a town or village on the way I would not have been content to live in; not a hill I did not wish to climb, or

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WILLIAM ALBERT ALLARD / NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK

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a hollow that did not invite me to laze under a tree. At one point, bowling along the open road, the Supertramp song "Take the Long Way Home" came on the radio. Listening to music while driving through a lovely landscape is one of life's great mood enhancers. And hearing the line, "But there are times that you feel you're part of the scenery," I was in Heaven.

The rain in Gettysburg the next day provided a somber atmosphere for driving from battlefield to battlefield, from the carnage with the opening shots at McPherson's Ridge on the first of July, 1863, to the Battle of Little Round Top on the second day, to the futility of Pickett's Charge on the third and last day. I had dreamed for years of spending time in Gettysburg, a place of heroism, eloquent words and deeds. For a small fee, I had hired a friendly historian-guide from the visitors center, and he drove my car—the car that had brought me across America from Los Angeles. My two days in and around Gettysburg were perhaps the most vivid of the trip for the depth of history and the reminder that, as a nation, we are warriors as well as peacemakers.

No history book can equal the experience of walking those battlefields, where, in the paradox of warfare, a whole country was at stake because of the distance of a meadow or the length of a ridge or the capture of a little hilltop.

On my last day, I drove east through Pennsylvania on a maddening choice of roads that led home to Cape Cod. I was heartened by the sight of an Amish farmer plowing a field in shirt-sleeves, shaded by a straw hat, his daughter hurrying toward him with a bucket, like an eternal image in the tenacity of settlement.

Nearly two million visitors a year stop at the battlefields of Gettysburg, reminders that "we are warriors as well as peacemakers."

In my life, I had sought out other parts of the world—Patagonia, Assam, the Yangtze; I had not realized that the dramatic desert I had imagined Patagonia to be was visible on my way from Sedona to Santa Fe, that the rolling hills of West Virginia were reminiscent of Assam and that my sight of the Mississippi recalled other great rivers. I'm glad I saw the rest of the world before I drove across America. I have traveled so often in other countries and am so accustomed to other landscapes, I sometimes felt on my trip that I was seeing America, coast to coast, with the eyes of a foreigner, feeling overwhelmed, humbled and grateful.

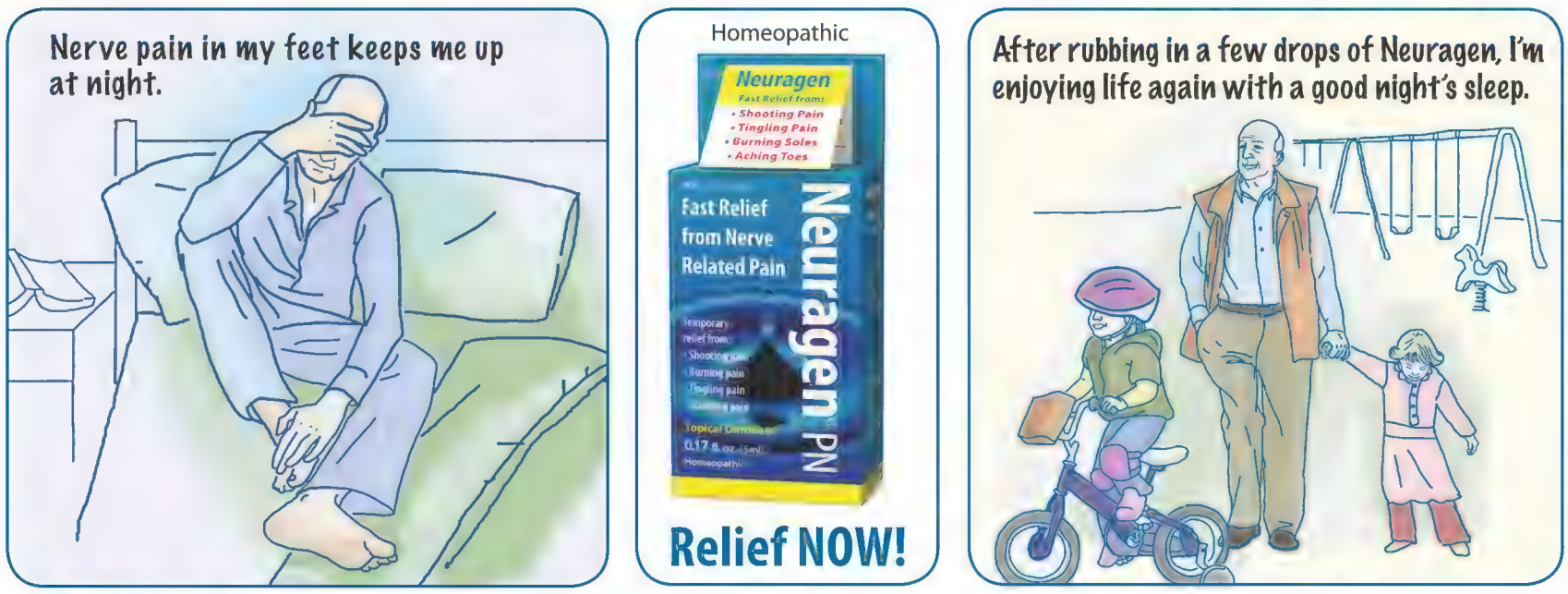
A trip abroad, any trip, ends like a movie—the curtain drops and then you're home, shut off. But this was different from any trip I'd ever taken. In the 3,380 miles I'd driven, in all that wonder, there wasn't a moment when I felt I didn't belong; not a day when I didn't rejoice in the knowledge that I was part of this beauty; not a moment of alienation or danger, no roadblocks, no sign of officialdom, never a second of feeling I was somewhere distant—but always the reassurance that I was home, where I belonged, in the most beautiful country I'd ever seen.

MOROCCO CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

ground where it takes place would be empty, the grass trampled down, the mud marked with wagon wheel tracks and hoof prints. I was traveling there with a young Moroccan man named Omar Ansor, whose father had worked at the American Fondouk for 25 years until his recent retirement; Omar's brother, Mohammed, has been working there with Dr. Frappier since 1994. Omar told me he loves animals, but he found my fascination with donkeys puzzling. Like many Moroccans, he considered them tools—good, useful tools, but nothing more. Maybe to him, my enthusiasm about donkeys was like being enthusiastic about wheelbarrows. "A donkey is just a donkey," he said. "I like horses."

The drive took us back past Casablanca, with its smoking chimneys and thicket of apartment buildings, and then to El Jadida, a whitewashed resort town on a flat spread of pinkish beach, where we stayed the night. Thursday morning was warm and clear, the light pouring over wide fields of corn and wheat. In several fields, donkeys and mules were already at work, pulling irrigation machines and plows, leaning into their harnesses. Carts hurtled alongside us on the shoulder of the road, loaded with entire families and nearly toppling loads of bulging burlap bags, boxes and miscellany, heading in the direction of the souk, the donkey or mule or horse moving snappily, as if the sound of the car traffic was egging them on. By the time we arrived, just after 7 a.m., the fairground was already mobbed. We had no trouble parking, because there were only a handful of cars and another handful of trucks, but the rest of the parking area was cluttered with wagons and carts and scores of donkeys and mules—a few hundred of them at least, dozing, nibbling on the scraps of grass, swaying in place, hobbled by a bit of plastic twine tied around their ankles. These weren't for sale—they were transportation, and they were parked while their owners were shopping.

A roar floated over the fairground; it was the combined chatter of hundreds of buyers and sellers haggling, and the smack and thump of boxes being opened and sacks being slapped down to be filled, and vendors hollering for attention and a blast of Moroccan music playing out of an unattended laptop computer that was hooked to man-size speakers, beneath a tent of fabric cut from a Nokia cellphone billboard. We walked in through a section of the souk where vendors sat behind mountains of dried beans in baskets four feet wide, and past stalls selling fried fish and kebabs, the greasy smoky air trapped in the tents, and then we arrived at the donkey area. At the entrance were rows and rows of vendors selling donkey and mule supplies. A young man, deep furrows in his face, was selling bits made of rusty iron—his inventory, hundreds of bits, was in a stack three feet high. Beside him, a family sat on a blanket surrounded by harnesses made of tan and orange and white nylon webbing, and every mem-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ber of the family, including the children, was stitching new harnesses while they waited to sell the ones they had already made. The next row had a dozen stalls, all offering donkey saddles—V-shaped wooden forms that sit on the animal's back and support the cart shafts. The saddles were made out of old chair legs and scrap lumber, the corners nailed together with squares cut from old tin cans; they were rough-looking but sturdy, and they had thick padding where they would rest on the animal's skin.

Just past the saddle sellers was a small field jammed with donkeys for sale, their owners scanning the crowd for buyers, the buyers strolling among them, stopping to glance at one, size up another. There was much milling around, the crowd moving in and out of the clusters of donkeys; the donkeys, though, stood quietly, nodding off in the warming sun, idly chewing a bit of grass, flicking off flies. They were a rainbow of browns, from dusty tan to almost chocolate, some sleek, others with the last patches of their thick winter coats. For someone who loves donkeys, it was an amazing sight. I stopped near one dealer who was in the center of the field. A small woman with piercing blue eyes, covered head to toe in black fabric, was completing her transaction—she had traded her older donkey and some cash to the dealer for a younger animal. The donkey dealer was tying a hobble on his new acquisition, and when he finished, he told me he was having a busy day and had sold eight donkeys already that morning. His name was Mohammed, and his farm was ten miles from the souk; he brought his load of donkeys here on the back of a flatbed truck. It was a good line of work. His family had always been donkey dealers—his mother and his father, his grandparents, their grandparents—and business was steady, 50 donkeys or so sold each week. He had brought 11 donkeys to the souk that morning, so he had three small, sturdy animals left.

"How old is this one?" I asked, patting the smallest of them.

"He's 3 years old," Mohammed said. As he said this, a young man behind him grabbed his elbow and moved him aside and said, "No, no, he's only 1."

"Well, is he 3 years old or 1 year old?"

"Uh, yes," Mohammed said. "And very strong." He leaned down and began untying the donkey's hobble. "You will not find a better donkey here at the souk. Just give me 15,000 dirhams."

I explained that I lived in New York and that it didn't seem practical for me to buy a donkey in Khemis-des Zemamra. Moreover, the price—the equivalent of about $1,800—sounded exorbitant. Donkeys here usually go for under 700 dirhams.

"Tell me, what is the price you want to pay?" Mohammed asked. He was a dark-skinned man with sharp features and a loud chesty laugh. He led the donkey a few feet away, and then turned him in a circle, displaying his fine points. By now a crowd of other donkey sellers was gathering. I explained again that I was not being coy, that as much as I would love to buy the donkey, it was more impractical than even I, an often impetuous shopper, could possibly be.

"Then we'll make it 12,000 dirhams," he said, firmly. "Very good."

By this time, the crowd had become emotionally invested in the idea that I might buy the donkey; a gaggle of little boys had joined in, and they were giggling and jumping up and down with excitement, dodging under the donkey's head to glance at me, and then dashing away. The donkey was unperturbed by the commotion; he seemed wise, as they all seem to be, to the fleeting nature of the moment, and the inconsequential nature of the outcome, that life would just roll on as it has, and will, for thousands of years, and that certain things like the hard work of animals and the mysterious air of the medina and the curious and contradictory nature of all of Morocco will probably never change.

I left without that small, sturdy donkey, who was undoubtedly named H'mar, but I know that if I return to that field in Khemis-des Zemamra years from now, I will find another brown donkey for sale with the exact same air of permanence and the exact same name.

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JAPAN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47

ployed by the family in their business, brewing and selling soy sauce. Yasuko Ikeno, the personable docent who seems justifiably proud of the antiquity and beauty of the Kikuya house, demonstrates an ingenious system that allows the sliding outside doors—designed for protection against the rain—to pivot around the corners of the building. She also takes us through the garden in which, as in many Japanese landscapes, the distance of just a few paces radically changes the view, and she encourages us to contemplate the flowering cherries and ancient cedars.

Our visit to Hagi culminates at the Tokoji temple, where the young, charismatic Buddhist abbot, Tetsuhiko Ogawa, presides over a compound that includes a burial ground reminiscent of the one at Gesshoji. The crows, I can't help noticing, are almost as loud as those in Matsue. But the temple is far from deserted, and while rows of the stone lanterns attest to the imminence of the dead, in this case the Mouri clan, the living are also very much in evidence. In fact, the place is quite crowded for an ordinary weekday afternoon. When I ask the abbot what constitutes a typical day in the life of a Buddhist priest, he smiles. He wakes at dawn to pray, and prays again in the evening. During the rest of the day, though, he does all the things other people do—grocery shopping, for example. And he devotes a certain amount of time to comforting and supporting the mourners whose loved ones are buried here. In addition, he helps arrange public programs; each year the city stages a series of classical chamber music concerts within the temple precincts.

As it happens, it's not an ordinary afternoon after all. It's the Buddha's birthday—April 8. A steady procession of celebrants have come to honor the baby Buddha by drinking sweet tea (the abbot invites us to try some—it's delicious!) and by pouring ladles of tea over a statue of the deity. While we are there, Jusetsu Miwa, one of Hagi's most famous potters, arrives, as he does each year on this date, to wish the Buddha well.

Just before we leave, Tetsuhiko Ogawa shows us a wooden bell, carved in the form of a fish, that is traditionally used at Zen temples to summon the monks to meals. In the mouth of the fish is a wooden ball that symbolizes earthly desires, and striking the bell, the abbot tells us, causes the fish (again, symbolically) to spit out the wooden ball—suggesting that we too should rid ourselves of our worldly longings and cravings. As the sound of the bell resonates over the temple, over the graves of the Mouri clan, over the heads of the worshipers come to wish Buddha a happy birthday, and out over the lovely city of Hagi, I find myself thinking that the hardest thing for me to lose might be the desire to return here. Even in the midst of travel, I have been studying the guidebooks to figure out how and when I might be able to revisit this beautiful region, this welcoming and seductive melding of old and new Japan, where I understand—as I could not have before I came here—why Lafcadio Hearn succumbed to its spell, and found it impossible to leave the country, where, after a lifetime of wandering, he at last felt so fully at home.

Gold-plated fixtures attest to the wealth and influence of the Mouri clan, shoguns who established the Buddhist Tokoji temple in 1691. They shaped events in the region for centuries, but their power faded as Japan's feudal system began to unravel in 1854. That is when a samurai from Hagi, Yoshida Shoin, sparked a revolution that restored the emperor to power, overturned the shoguns and set Japan on the road to modernity.

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JAMAICA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 61

canopies of its famous palms and its streamers of dangling orchids. Unlike Jamaica's other gardens, Castleton's star has never dimmed, perhaps because, straddling the direct road from Kingston to Ocho Rios, it has been accessible and in plain sight. Many Jamaicans recall family picnics taken beside its river, whose palest turquoise water delineates the garden's eastern boundary. Today, Castleton is a featured stop for tourists; on this day, the roadside parking lot was full, and local guides possessed of uncertain knowledge were conducting impromptu tours.

Across the river a cliff wall loomed, hung with its own flowering vines, lanced with its own straight-backed palms straining for light. Jamaica's own flora had been of great interest to Bligh's patron, Sir Joseph Banks, and Bligh's instructions directed that after disposing of his Tahitian cargo he was to take on board a consignment of Jamaican specimens, potted in readiness by the island's chief botanists.

"I find that no Plants were as yet collected for His Majestys [sic] Garden at Kew," Bligh recorded in his log on February 13, 1793, the understated entry bristling with irritation at this failure of duty. Bligh's health had not recovered from his ordeal following the loss of the *Bounty*, now four years past, and he was wracked with recurrent malaria he had caught in the Dutch East Indies. Indeed, early in this second voyage, Bligh's officers had feared for their captain's life; but he had rallied, as always, and with head pounding, suffering savagely from sun glare under the Pacific skies, he had returned to Tahiti, overseen the transplantation of 2,634 plants, conned his ships through the treacherous Endeavour Straits and arrived in Jamaica. Now, at this final stage of his long and arduous passage, delays mounted and Bligh's health again faltered. The late-arriving Jamaican plants destined for Kew were eventually stowed on board the *Providence,* then unloaded, as word came from the Admiralty that because of events in France—the guillotining of Louis XVI

and subsequent war with England—British ships, the *Providence* included, should stand by for possible action.

It was early June when Bligh at last received orders to sail. The *Providence*, stowed with 876 carefully potted Jamaican specimens, weighed anchor at Port Royal, and struck west for Bluefields Bay. Here, Bligh intended to rejoin his tender, the *Assistant*, which had been earlier dispatched with 84 breadfruit, along with four mysterious "Mangodoodles," for estates at this opposite end of the island. Bluefields had assumed a place of some importance in my own botanical pilgrimage; not only was this the site of Bligh's final anchorage in Jamaican waters, but, so it was rumored, inland from the bay, two of Bligh's original breadfruit trees survived.

Although old Jamaican hands pronounce Bluefields "ruined," to a first-time visitor it appears as one of the more unspoiled stretches of Jamaica's coastline. In living memory, floods and hurricanes have silted and altered the shoreline—Ivan, in 2004, caused memorable damage—and the beach, it is true, is scant, wedged between narrow stretches of mangroves that parallel the coastal road. A string of bright fishing boats lay beached, and opposite some desolate food stalls a wooden jetty extended into the now flat-calm sea.

I had arranged to meet with a professional guide of the ambiguously named Reliable Adventures Jamaica. Wolde Kristos led many ventures in the area—nature tours, bird-watching tours, tours of Taino, Spanish and English history—and was an ardent promoter of Bluefields as the tourist destination best representing "the real Jamaica." He knew the fabled breadfruit trees well, as his foster mother, born in 1912, had told him, "All senior citizens in Bluefields tell of William Bligh," Wolde said.

I had obtained rough directions to one of the trees: "Near bend in the road where you would go up to Gosse's house"—"Gosse" was Philip Henry Gosse, who in 1844-45 had stayed at an old "Great House," or former plantation house, while he researched and wrote

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An old breadfruit tree, possibly one that made the long voyage from Tahiti, soars to 100 feet near Bluefields Bay (above). The sturdy survivor still produces fruit, as well as new saplings, evidence of the plant's longevity and self-propagating powers.

his classic book *The Birds of Jamaica.*

The Great House stood, semi-derelict, at the end of a grassy drive in an overgrown yard. A mother goat and her kid had taken shelter from new rain under the porch, whose supportive timbers had been replaced by twin concrete columns. The exuberant Wolde, with his associate, Deceita Turner, led the way decisively up the front steps and pounded on the locked door. "We will get the caretaker," he said. At length the door was opened by an attractive young woman, who greeted us politely and allowed us in to view the house's historic interior—its mahogany stairway and arches, the old flooring and a hallway of tightly shut mahogany doors.

"They are afraid I would rent the rooms," said the caretaker, explaining why every interior door to every room was locked, except the one to the room in which she slept; "they" were the absent owners, an Indian family who now

lives in England. "I saw them about two years ago," she mused. She was paid no salary but was allowed to live here and to cook her meals outside. "She is guarding this place with her life!" said Wolde in sudden passion. "If she were not here, people would not move into the house, but they would cut down the trees—cedar is expensive."

One of Bligh's fabled breadfruit trees had allegedly stood in the grassy yard, until it had been felled by Ivan. A stump and rubble of wood still marked the site. Behind it, at a plausible distance among some undergrowth, was a sturdy breadfruit sapling, several feet high, which Wolde speculated was a sucker of the old original.

The breadfruit tree that still survived stood just around the corner, off the road from Bluefields Bay, in a grassy lot in which a battered bus was parked. The long rain at last stopped, and now, in the last hour of daylight, this little patch of secondary forest glittered greenly.

Rising to a magnificent 100 feet, the tree stood at the foot of a small gully, backed by a vine-covered embankment. A mottled white bark covered its six-foot girth, and the wide ground stretching beneath its broad canopy was littered with lobed leaves and fallen fruit. Wolde pointed to the gully wall. "This is what protected it from Ivan."

On June 11, 1793, Bligh had overseen the *Providence* washed "fore and aft and dried with Fires." He had spent the week off Bluefields readying his ship—overseeing the land parties that scavenged for timber or filled water casks from the Black River—and exercising the ship guns. Twice he gave the signal to sail, and twice the "constant Calms and light Variable Airs" prevented him from doing so.

The passage from Jamaica to England was one that Bligh, the consummate navigator, could surely have accomplished in his sleep. He knew this particular route well, for from 1784 to 1787, before his fateful commission on the *Bounty*, Bligh had lived in Jamaica, employed by his wealthy uncle-in-law Duncan Campbell to sail merchant

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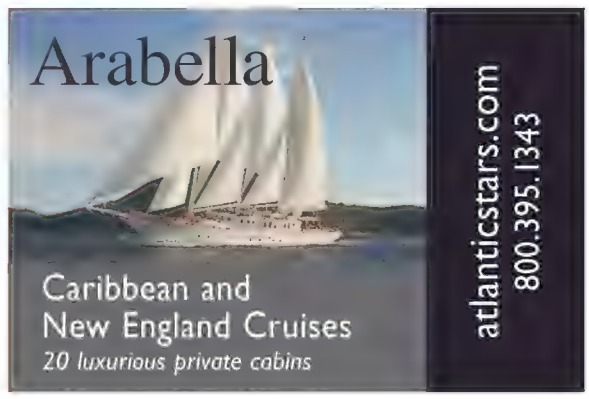

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ships loaded with rum and sugar between Jamaica and England; Lloyds List, a registry of shipping movements, records ten such voyages made by Bligh during this time. Remnants of the Salt Spring estate, the Campbell property that had been Bligh's base when he was not on his ship, lie on Green Island Harbor less than 20 miles from Lucea, the attractive old 18th-century town; the earliest known chart made by William Bligh is of the Lucea Harbor.

At the old British fort, its black guns still trained on the sea, I met with Evangeline Clare, who had established the local historical museum and has long conducted research of her own into the sprawling and powerful Campbell clan; it was she who had supplied me with the Lloyds shipping lists. A striking African-American woman with silver-blond hair, she had come to Jamaica 44 years ago as a Peace Corps volunteer, married a Jamaican and stayed on.

In the heat of the day, we drove the short distance from her house on Green Island down a dirt track to the site of Campbell Great House, which, built in the 1780s, was slipping brokenly into scrub. "Cane cutters have been camping here," Evangeline told me, and was clearly concerned about the reception we might meet; but in fact the ruined house, which wore an air of ineluctable abandonment, was deserted. It had lost its roof to Gilbert, but its thick, immutable walls, built of ballast stone carried from England, still held off the heat. The Campbell garden had been legendary, "with beautiful lawns, groves, and shrubberies," as a contemporary visitor glowingly reported, "which give his residence the appearance of one of those charming seats that beautify the country, and exalt the taste of England." In particular, Mr. Campbell had been assiduous in his cultivation of the breadfruit, which had continued to flourish around the house over the passing centuries, and were cut down only in recent years.

Beyond the house stretched the remnant cane fields, the basis of Jamaica's enormous wealth during the 17th and 18th centuries, when it was the world's leading producer of sugar, molasses and

Fort Charlotte, named for the new wife of Britain's King George III in 1761, watches over the port of Lucea (above). Ballast from ships, recycled as building stone, contributed to Campbell Great House in the 1780s. The house sits in cane fields near Salt Spring (below).

rum, and one of Britain's most valuable possessions. This heady run as the center of the economic world had ended with the end of slavery in the 19th century.

"Somewhere along the line, I think people figured out that if they could just get rid of this cane, they could do away with the whole slave thing," said Evangeline. "I mean—can you *imagine* . . . "

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tice, was being felt in their boycott of West Indian products. While Bligh's own views regarding this institution are not known, the official view of his commission was enshrined in the name of his first ship; when purchased by the Admiralty from Duncan Campbell it had been named *Bethia*, but was rechristened for its fateful mission—*Bounty*. Although the breadfruit tree flourished and spread across Jamaica, more than 40 years passed before its fruit was popular to local taste, by which time, in 1834, emancipation had been declared in the British Empire.

Today, the breadfruit is a favorite staple of the Jamaican diet. A mature tree produces in excess of 200 pounds of fruit a season. One hundred grams of roasted breadfruit contains 160 calories, two grams of protein, 37 grams of carbohydrates, as well as calcium and other minerals. Breadfruit is eaten roasted, grilled, fried, steamed, boiled and buttered, and as chips and fritters; over-ripe, the liquid fruit can be poured out of its skin to make pancakes, and mashed with sugar and spices it makes a pudding. For its longevity and self-propagation it is perceived as a symbol of perseverance, a belief, according to the *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage*, "encoded in the saying, 'The more you chop breadfruit root, the more it spring.'"

Its indelible association with William Bligh, then, is appropriate, for he had persevered through two momentously arduous voyages to fulfill his commission. Other ordeals were to come; back in England, families of the mutineers had been spinning their own version of the piratical seizure of the *Bounty*, recasting Bligh, who had departed England a national hero, as a tyrannical villain. Weighing anchor in Bluefields Bay, Bligh had no premonition of the trials ahead; he was mindful only of what he had accomplished. "[T]his was the quietest and happiest day I had seen the Voyage," he wrote, as a private aside, in his log, on the day he discharged his plant cargo at Bath. He had done his duty and believed that all that remained was to sail home.

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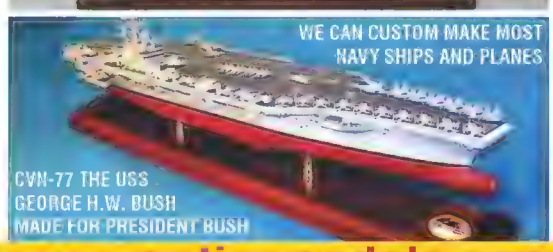

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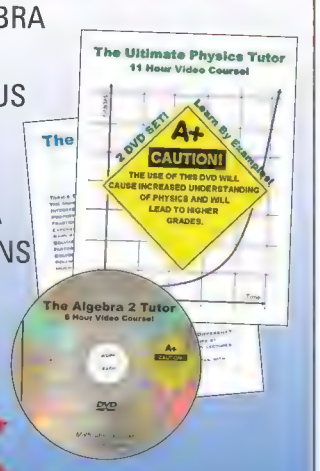
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—Maggie R.

Results not typical.

Sleep is the only way we can recharge our brain and restore important neurotransmitters. Sleep is also the time when the body does most of its repair work including rebuilding and restoring muscle tissue. This is because growth hormones are secreted during sleep, which is essential to rebuilding tissues.

Consequences Of Too Little Sleep

There is a growing body of evidence indicating that chronic sleep deprivation increases risk of early death. In addition, one of the fastest growing areas of research is the link between chronic sleep deprivation and the risk of becoming overweight and obesity. Sleep deprivation can lead to:

- Greater risk of heart disease
- Increased risk of illness
- Thinking impairments, like slower reaction time, memory loss & confusion
- Poor work performance
- Mood problems like depression, anger & irritability
- Risk of unhealthy weight gain & loss

Lack Of Sleep Impacts 1 In 6 Adults

The National Sleep Foundation's Sleep in America polls reveal that over a six year period only about half of adults get a good night's sleep every night. Sleep deficit is frequently related to too much caffeine, nicotine and alcohol. It is also related to stress, long hours at work, night shifts and working on home computers before going to sleep.

"I had problems sleeping for several years but never wanted to take prescription meds because of possible side effects. I have taken RestAid® every night for over two weeks, and I've never slept better. I fall asleep within a half hour of taking it, and I stay asleep longer." —Scott M.

Results not typical.

New Non-Prescription Breakthrough

Before resorting to expensive prescription sleeping pills with potential negative side effects, try RestAid®. RestAid® is an all-natural sleeping supplement that will help you fall asleep faster, sleep deeper and awake more refreshed.

RestAid® utilizes a Patented Cysteine Milk Peptide® that is clinically proven to break down natural stimulants, toxic substances, alcohol and caffeine – all known to interrupt your sleep cycles. Its delivery system gets the nutrients into the blood stream much quicker than other supplements.

HOW RESTAID WORKS

RestAid™ contains the perfect combination of Cysteine Milk Peptide® and Melatonin. Cysteine Milk Peptide® counteracts toxins, stimulants and alcohol which disrupt sleep patterns and Melatonin works naturally to synchronize your body's sleep rhythm.

Cysteine Milk Peptide® – Shown in clinical studies to immediately boost levels of Glutathione, which is a substance produced by the body that is needed to break down toxins such as caffeine and alcohol that disrupt our natural sleep patterns.

Vitamin B12 – is proven to cause an earlier release of Melatonin at night, which resets the sleep-wake cycle.

Melatonin – is a hormone produced by the body that naturally increases sleep efficiency.

Lemon Balm Extract – is a natural sedative that soothes and relaxes your mind and body.

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For years consumers have only had the option of prescription pills or ineffective supplements to be able to get a good night's sleep!

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Silver price increase based from July 2003 - July 2009

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6. The Silver American Eagles are the largest, purest and the first legal tender silver collector coins ever minted in United States history for true collector value.
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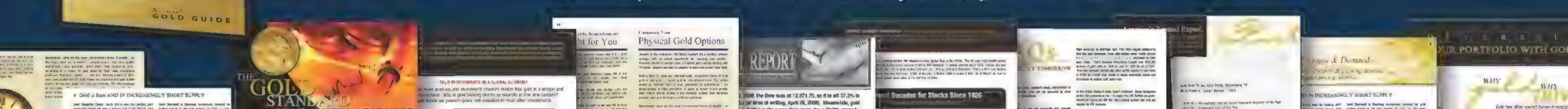

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Free armored safes being doled out to public

Armored Safe giveaway ends public worry for those who rush to buy up hoards of brilliant, never-circulated U.S. Gov't issued coins that will never lose their cash value

HELP IS ON THE WAY: This never-before-seen photo captures the rapid shipment of free Presidential Armored Safes (left) that are now being shipped to U.S. citizens all across the country. The World Reserve is also making available the larger Grand Presidential Armored Safes (right) free to the general public who beat today's published deadline to buy up the newly released Collection of never-circulated U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency. Those who get through by calling the National Delivery Hotline at 1-866-964-2951 and beat the 7 day order deadline will get the Armored Safes for free.

By Shawn Oyler

UMS - Imagine finally getting something that will never lose its value.

Sounds too good to be true?

Well, it's true and word is quickly spreading about the free handout of Armored Safes that are being stocked full of never-circulated U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency that by law will never be minted again.

These free Armored Safes are being turned over to the general public who make it in time to beat the order deadline for their share of the hoard of brilliant, never-circulated U.S. Gov't coins and currency before the 7 day shutoff.

"The frantic demand for U.S. Gov't coins has caused the U.S. Mint® to officially halt the sale of many of its most valuable coins," said lead consultant for the World Reserve Thomas C. Harris, Retired Deputy Director of the U.S. Treasury Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

"Today, the World Reserve began to release this hoard of U.S. Gov't coins and currency in a free Armored Safe to the general public. Having valuable U.S. Gov't coins serves as an economic life raft. This valuable Collection will never, never, never lose its face value. You will always have something worth a lot of money," said Harris.

Here's the best part, among the U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency that everyone gets is the highly sought after American Eagle 1-ounce silver bullion coin made from solid .999 fine silver, 250 of the first liberty engraved Westward Journey Nickels, a banker's stack of historic $2 bills and a full vault tube of the Presidential Golden Dollar Coins.

Here's why that is so important. Just think if you would have saved the same number of never-circulated Eisenhower Dollar coins from 1974. Remarkably, they would now be worth 500% more in collector value.

This gives you a hint that these are not the same grade as the coins found in loose change, or from the local bank. In fact, these coins remain in brilliant, never-circulated condition if left sealed and untouched.

U.S. Gov't Savings Bonds used to be a favorite way to keep money safe and popular to give as gifts. But no one can take a Savings Bond and go buy something with it.

That's why this hoard of valuable coins gives everyone the comfort of having full control of their money. No matter what, they will never lose their U.S. cash value.

If times ever get really tough any coin in the hoard could be used to buy anything. But unless it is a good reason, only a fool would do that because this personal hoard of money is already worth so much more in collector value.

"So many people are buying up these coins. Even for those people who give away some of their collection as gifts, they are keeping the Armored Safe for themselves," said Robert Anthony, Director of the private World Reserve Monetary Exchange.

"This Safe is one of the absolute best places to keep valuables and important papers. People will now have a safe place to store their wills, guns, jewelry, antiques, keys, coins and even cash," Anthony said.

"The only problem the Safe creates is when it's time to read your Will. You need to make sure everyone knows who you want to leave it to," he said.

"When Americans get their hands on this Safe and their very own personal hoard of U.S. Gov't Coins, they'll really do a double take. Everyone will feel like they just won the lottery," he said.

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How to get the free Armored Safes

All those who beat the 7 day order deadline for each personal hoard of U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency from the World Reserve Collection will actually be awarded the Presidential Armored Safes absolutely free.

Eligibility: Certain restrictions apply: Open to the public only, sorry no dealers. Those who miss the 7 day deadline will be turned away from this free offer and required to wait for future announcements, in this or other publications. The entire World Reserve Collection must be obtained to get the safe free. For more information about the larger Grand Presidential Armored Safes please call.

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■ **NO MORE WORRIES:** Carolyn Ford of Perry Town, OH thought she hit the jackpot when her free Grand Presidential Safe was delivered. "I already have some old coins, but I wanted this whole hoard of U.S. coins as a nice nest egg. I'll also set aside some of my hoard for my Grandchildren. Now I don't have to worry where to keep my important papers and my Grandfather's gun since I have my new safe," she said.

7 Smart places to stash your cash

By Robert Anthony

So you're still hiding money under the mattress or in the bread box?

Well, you're not alone. Ever since financial institutions have been dropping like flies, millions of Americans have stopped relying solely on their banks.

1. Be sure your bank is insured. If you're not sure if your bank is FDIC insured find out or get your money out. They only have enough cash on hand to cover about 2% of nationwide deposits. So it's not always wise to keep all your eggs in one basket.

2. Start and grow a coin collection. Coin collections are tangible assets that will always keep their face value, instead of just owning stocks that could depreciate or lose you money.

3. Keep cash safe at home. Cash is King. Believe it, but remember not to keep it in a thief's favorite spot; like in the bread box or the mattress. These will never have the protection that a quality home safe can provide.

4. Savings Bonds, an old favorite. Savings Bonds are an easy way for your money to stay safe in the future. However, if lost or stolen they could be difficult to replace unless the serial number was kept in a safe place.

5. Gold and silver still shine. If you own gold or silver, great, hold on to it. But if you don't, one of your best bets is to try to get as many U.S. Gov't issued gold and silver coins as you can.

6. Hold on to real estate. With interest rates at historic all-time lows the market is sure to recover and property values will once again bounce back. So those who hold on to their homes for the long term will likely reap the benefits of these investments.

7. Buy a good safe. Home safes become an absolute necessity during economic turmoil. But, because of the huge spike in recent sales, safes may be hard to come by.

With all this you'll be much safer, just in case your bank is the next to fail. ■

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The United States Rare Coin and Bullion Reserve Vault Facility today announces the final release of U.S. Gov't Issued Gold Coins previously held in The West Point Depository/U.S. Mint. For a limited time, U.S. citizens will have the opportunity to purchase these $5 Gov't Issued Gold Coins for the incredible "at-cost" price of only $124.00 per coin. An amazing price because these U.S. Gov't Issued Gold Coins are completely free of dealer markup. That's correct, our cost. This may be your final opportunity to buy U.S. Gov't Issued Gold Coins "at-cost." The Gold market, which recently skyrocketed past $900/oz., is predicted by experts to have the explosive upside potential of reaching up to $3,000/oz. in the future. **Due to extremely high Gold demand, availability of these special at-cost Gold Coins may vary based on current vault inventory.** The United States Rare Coin and Bullion Reserve will release these U.S. Gov't Issued Gold Coins "at-cost" on a first-come, first-serve basis. Orders that are not immediately received or reserved with the order center could be subject to cancellation and your checks returned uncashed. Good luck. We hope that everyone will have a chance to purchase this special U.S. Gov't Issued Gold "at-cost." Order your Gold immediately to avoid disappointment. Special arrangements can be made for Gold purchases over $50,000.

U.S. Gov't Issued American Eagle Gold Coins Coins enlarged to show detail

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By Executive Order of Congress Public Law 99-185, Americans can now buy new Government Issued Gold. Congressionally authorized United States Gold Coins provide American citizens with a way to add physical Gold to their portfolios. Gold American Eagles are made from solid Gold mined here in America, forged at the U.S. Mint at West Point, and produced with a U.S. Dollar denomination... making them Legal Tender United States Gold Coins. They are highly liquid, easily transportable, and, unlike paper assets, American Gold Eagles have a tangible value you can feel each time you hold your own Gold. Though no one, including The United States Rare Coin and Bullion Reserve, can guarantee a Gold Coin's future value will go up or down, numerous experts are predicting Gold to reach $3,000/oz. Now is the time to consider converting part of your paper assets into Gold. The United States Rare Coin and Bullion Reserve has a limited supply and urges you to make your vault reservations immediately. Call a Sr. Gold Specialist at 1-888-465-3915 to start your Gold portfolio and begin protecting your wealth today. If you've been waiting to move your money into Gold, the time is now.

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Last Fan Standing

Why I'll always root for the home team

BY ROGER M. WILLIAMS

EARLY IN THIS PAST SEASON'S National Hockey League playoffs, I turned on a telecast of a Washington Capitals-New York Rangers game. I have lived in Washington for the past 25 years, but I was rooting for the Rangers. Growing up, they were "my" hockey team. To this day, whenever and whomever they play, I want them to win.

And hockey is the least of my New York sports allegiances. I remain, half a century past the peak of my sports passions, a fervent fan of the Yankees, Knicks and football Giants. I'm even a fan of the baseball Giants, five decades after they renounced the Polo Grounds for San Francisco.

So it's been, across several decades and each of the other cities in which I've lived: Atlanta (during two sizable stretches), Los Angeles, San Francisco. Call it disaffection or contrariness, arrested development or incurable nostalgia. Whatever the malady, the symptoms are as clear in Washington as they were elsewhere: I'm a fan who doesn't give a hockey puck about any of my current city's teams.

Though my attitude probably has more to do with the impressionability of youth, it may also be peculiar to men of my, ahem, era. When I was growing up, professional leagues had few franchises, and the ones that existed stayed put. Players switched teams only when they were traded or released. Fan loyalty, on an individual as well as a group level, came easily; you knew, for example, that the Yankee Clipper and Yogi would be in New York forever. Yankee haters may find this hard to believe, but the fact that the Yanks won the pennant year after year was for me just icing on the cake.

Location also mattered. Living in the New York City suburbs meant you had three baseball teams to embrace (but never all three: rooting for both the Brooklyn Dodgers and Giants was emotionally impossible); and for several years, the National Football League offered its own Brooklyn Dodgers, and, later, the rival All-America Conference league put forth its own New York Yankees. A kid had to be comatose not to live and die for at least a couple of teams!

As the baseball Yankees eventually sank into mediocrity, joining both the Giants and, God knows, the Knicks, my adopted cities sprouted some terrific teams: the Lakers and transplanted Dodgers in Los Angeles, the charismatic 49ers in San Francisco and, eventually, the former Milwaukee Braves in Atlanta. I spurned all of them, going to games only when their New York counterparts came to play and then rooting for the visitors. After free agency arrived, New York stars relentlessly changed hats, but my loyalty to the teams—and whatever outlanders they brought aboard—has never wavered.

Such devotion comes at a price. I can't share in the up-close ecstasy or anguish (Washington is awash in one or the other after every Redskins game). My baseball teams seldom appear on home TV, and on autumn Sundays, I often have to join a small, furtive group in a dingy sports bar in order to see the football Giants play; in craven deference to the rowdy Redskin majority, management usually turns off the sound on our set.

Two of my best friends, who've also moved around a good deal, have switched caps, so to speak, whenever they've called a new city home. They chide me for not doing the same. As with a one-night stand, they are confusing transitory pleasure with true love. Sure, the latter imposes problems and frustrations, but it's so much more rewarding in the long run.

My grave marker shall therefore bear a list of my teams and this epitaph: "In victory or defeat, in places near or far, forever true."

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